Magic, Body and the Self in Eighteenth-Century Sweden

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Magic, Body and the Self in Eighteenth-Century Sweden

By
Jacqueline Van Gent

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Cover illustrations: Front cover: Wall cover depicting a magical hare from Småland, late 18th century. Magical hares were central to milk magic and commonly represented witches' familiars in Sweden. Their appearance was often unusual and they were said to be skilled musicians. Copyright: Smålands Museum, Växjö, Sweden.

Back cover: Book of magic which belonged to Neringe-Per (1759–1834) who was a renowned magical healer in Skåne. These handwritten booklets contained spells, Christian prayers and other formulas used in magical rituals. They were often passed down within one family. Copyright: Nordiska Museet, Reference number: NM 41.652, Stockholm, Sweden.

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Jacqueline Van Gent
June, 2008.

INTRODUCTION

Few scholars would today question the continuity of magical practices across Europe in the eighteenth century. It now seems certain that, contrary to earlier assumptions, witchcraft remained an important part of the everyday life of Europeans after the witch persecutions ended.[1] People continued to employ magical rituals for healing, love magic, and fortune telling, and sustained the belief that ill-wishing neighbours could harm them and their livestock by means of witchcraft. While juridical frames for the crime of witchcraft changed in most eighteenth-century European societies, we cannot speak of a decline in magical beliefs.[2]

Why should this be so? No one doubts that the period 1600–1800 witnessed revolutionary developments in scientific thinking. Among the most fundamental changes was the emergence of Cartesian philosophy and its radical division between body and mind. Another milestone was the development of Carl Linneaus' new wide-ranging and rigorous system for classifying the natural world.[3] Scholars are now enquiring as to why these significant intellectual shifts did not simply supersede older, magical world views. This rethinking of the Enlightenment and the scientific revolution have also led to a fundamental shift in the way in which scholars approach the history of witchcraft. No longer is the rise and fall of witchcraft persecutions the central theme in historical works; instead new research interrogates the wider cultural meanings of witchcraft.[4] As Roy Porter has so aptly put it:

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[1] See for example Ian Bostridge, *Witchcraft and Its Transformations*; Willem de Blécourt, "On the Continuation of Witchcraft"; David Meili, *Hexen in Wasterkingen*; Wolfgang Behringer, "Der 'Bayerische Hexenkrieg'"; J. Geyer-Kordesch, "Whose Enlightenment?"; Owen Davies, "Witchcraft: The Spell That Didn't Break"; Julian Goodare, ed., *The Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context*; Peter Maxwell-Stuart, "Witchcraft and Magic in Eighteenth-Century Scotland."

[2] For discussion of Keith Thomas and a good summary of the ensuing historiographical development, see J. Barry, "Introduction: Keith Thomas and the Problem of Witchcraft."

[3] Peter Dear, *Revolutionizing the Sciences*.

[4] Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra, "The European Witchcraft Debate and the Dutch Variant," esp. 191–92.

> With the benefit of cultural anthropology and the sociology of knowledge, today's historians have abandoned the appealing but question-begging evolutionism that once celebrated the ascent of man from magic to science, from religion to reason; celebrating the truth has given way to analysing structures of belief.[5]

This new perspective on magical beliefs raises a host of new questions. If magic was a significant interpersonal power, how then was personhood perceived in the early modern period? What kind of selfhood made it possible to influence fellow humans through spells and rituals? Why did people think that their emotions and desires were so powerful as to affect the bodies of others? How, exactly, did magical beliefs differ from the Enlightenment postulation of a dichotomous body and psyche? Which sections of society accepted and practised them, and were the interconnections so strong as to explain the persistence of magic long into the 'scientific' era?

Notwithstanding an enormous worldwide interest in magical practices, historians have only very recently begun to consider witchcraft practices during the age of Enlightenment, leading one scholar to speak rightly of the eighteenth century as "a lacuna" in historical studies on witchcraft.[6] Emerging eighteenth-century witchcraft studies have partially concentrated on the discussion of Enlightenment representations of witchcraft and the ensuing changes to witchcraft legislation, chiefly the abolition of witchcraft as a capital crime across Europe.[7] We can, however, now say that increasingly an alternative picture has begun to emerge because studies which address local practices of magic during the Enlightenment have led us to substantially revise our perceptions of witchcraft.[8] This new focus on witchcraft and magic after the witch hunts provides us with the opportunity to take a fresh look at the practice of witchcraft and to explore it with an innovative methodology.[9] The study of witchcraft can now be freed from the constraints

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[5] Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra, Brian P. Levack, and Roy Porter, "Witchcraft after the Witch-Trials," 193–94.

[6] Ibid., 175.

[7] There is of course Wolfgang Behringer's excellent study of the Enlightenment debates about witchcraft in Bavaria, "Der 'Bayerische Hexenkrieg'." For a discussion on the Enlightenment and witchcraft trials in Sweden see Linda Oja, "The Superstitious Other," 60–68.

[8] The first comprehensive studies of this period are Owen Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture*, and Owen Davies and Willem de Blécourt, eds., *Beyond the Witch Trials*.

[9] This has been suggested by Davies and de Blécourt, "Introduction: Beyond the Witch Trials," Ibid., 1–8.

of demonology and torture and adopt a long-term perspective. It may emerge that witch hunts, with their specific social dynamics and narrative requirements, have been the exception, rather than the common form of witch trials in early modern Europe. It must be stressed that witchcraft cases in the period after the witch hunts display completely different dynamics and narratives. The majority of cases do not fit the demonological genre of diabolical seduction and a pact, but are reflective of a broader syncretistic popular culture that combined popular perceptions of Christianity, including pre-Reformation rituals in now Protestant areas, with older local beliefs. Witchcraft outside of the persecutions did not depend on a confession and the naming of other witches, and was rarely accompanied by torture. Thus, we do not have the snowball effect of implicating many people, which often led to a social and political crisis.[10] The focus on witch trials in the aftermath of witch hunting in the eighteenth century brings to light alternative narratives of magic which were only slightly influenced by conventions of the demonological genre.

This orientation provides the genesis of this book, which addresses a number of significant new problems posed in modern witchcraft scholarship. Building on the work of historians who have provided us with the first systematic overview of eighteenth-century European studies and the work by Davies and Blécourt, which addresses eighteenth-century witchcraft for the first time in a comprehensive collection of essays, this book seeks to provide regional in-depth analysis of post-witch hunt Swedish magic. One of the central issues of contemporary scholarship remaining to be explored is the analysis of witchcraft through the relationships between body, self, and society.[11] Eighteenth-century cases of magic raise important questions as to how this interconnection between material and spiritual and between individual and society was imagined, enforced, and experienced. How was a body imagined to transfer magical power? What notions of the self underpinned magical rituals? And how do we analyze concepts of body and personhood that are distinctively different to our own post-Enlightenment notions

[10] Behringer discusses the specific dynamics of witch-hunts in a wider European comparative perspective; *Witches and Witch-Hunts*, 83–164.

[11] The importance of the body for an understanding of witchcraft has been emphasized by several feminist scholars. See for example Lyndal Roper, "Exorcism and the Theology of the Body," in her *Oedipus and the Devil*, 171–98; and Diane Purkiss, "No Limit: The Body of the Witch," in her *The Witch in History. Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations*, 119–44.

of individual identity? The availability of comprehensive and rich eighteenth-century Swedish witchcraft trial records provides us with an unparalleled opportunity to examine, analyze, and postulate a new cultural perspective on magic and witchcraft in early modern Europe.[12]

Swedish sources have hitherto been little consulted in histories of European witchcraft; yet they constitute a double blessing for scholars. In the first place, the trial transcripts are extensive and cover most of the eighteenth century. The high number of over 800 cases brought before the Appellate Court of Göta alone gives us safe ground to assume that the eighteenth-century cases are not mere isolated incidents, but indicators of broad cultural and social patterns. Indeed, the cases for this period are more abundant than for the seventeenth century, which is commonly held to have been the golden age of Swedish witchcraft due to the well-known trials in Dalarna during 1668–1676.[13] Such a surprising increase in the number of trials demands a historical explanation. As will be discussed in the following chapter, a closer examination of the nature of accusation shows that the number of accusations of non-harmful magic increased, while the number of cases of *maleficium* remained remarkably constant during the eighteenth century. The change may be due to changes in the social background of the accusers. During the eighteenth century, local clergy acted increasingly as plaintiffs against people suspected of practising benevolent magic.

Additionally, the special character of the trial documents derives from the nature of the Swedish legal system which generated the cases of everyday magic. In contrast to most other European countries, Sweden had an accusatory system.[14] This resulted in witch trials where the testimonies of witnesses had more impact than in an inquisitorial sys-

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[12] An excellent survey of existing witchcraft literature for the eighteenth century has been provided by Gijswijt-Hofstra, Levack and Porter, "Witchcraft after the Witch-Trials." Recent publications which have included a discussion of eighteenth-century cases include de Blécourt and Davies, *Beyond the Witch Trials*, and Roper's *Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany*.

[13] For an interpretation of these trials see Bengt Ankarloo, *Trolldomsprocesserna i Sverige*; Ankarloo, "Sweden: The Mass Burnings (1668–1676)"; Birgitta Lagerlöf-Genetay, *Den svenska häxprocessernas utbrotskedde 1668–1671*; and Marie Lennersand, "The Aftermath of the Witch-Hunt in Dalarna."

[14] Other Scandinavian countries shared this legal framework, see Ankarloo and Henningsen, eds., *Early Modern European Witchcraft*. Christina Larner described a similar system for early modern Scotland, see Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion: The Politics of Popular Beliefs*.

tem.[15] These substantiations were drawn from the extensive witnesses' depositions of community members. Thus, the richly detailed records allow a view of the variety of popular magical beliefs and practices extant in eighteenth-century Sweden and provide excellent insight into the ways in which alleged practitioners and victims of magic and their contemporary observers envisaged the whole interconnected web of their environment—self, body, and society.[16] The majority of witchcraft cases of the Appellate Court of Göta (1634–1779) were heard during the eighteenth century and I will discuss the workings of the appellate and the local assizes with special consideration of the legal changes that affected witchcraft trials during the eighteenth century. Particular attention will be given to the role of gossip as an important strategy of local power and politics in witchcraft trials. A consideration of witnesses' depositions is important in the analysis of the socially crucial concepts of honour and reputation, the construction of a moral community, and the relationship between state and church control during the eighteenth century.

An anthropological analysis of these court records suggests that the Enlightenment postulation of a dichotomous body and psyche was not accepted by the majority of the eighteenth-century Swedish population; instead, their words and actions demonstrate a strong belief in the interconnectedness of matter and spirit, and the consequent magical power of words and emotions over and through the body. That this magic was popular, rather than learned, is indicated by the mundane nature of much of the evidence: magic rituals and charms were predominantly used to inflict or to heal illnesses in humans and animals, secure marriage promises, find treasure, and obtain hunting success. Misfortunes attributed to witchcraft included shipwrecks, natural catastrophes, fire, sickness in animals and humans, and failure in butter making and beer brewing.[17] The daily application of magic was marked in many cases by the absence of a presupposed pact with the Devil or flight to the

[15] See for a comparative discussion E. William Monter, "Scandinavian Witchcraft in Anglo–American Perspective."

[16] In recent years, an increasing number of historical studies of popular magic in early modern Europe have emerged, but these are often chronologically limited to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See, for example, Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours*; Marion Gibson, *Reading Witchcraft: Stories of Early English Witches*.

[17] Gijswijt-Hofstra, Levack and Porter, "Witchcraft after the Witch-Trials," 177.

Sabbath.[18] In analyzing these cases, I argue that an understanding of the culturally longstanding practices of witchcraft and magical healing requires an even wider discussion of historical notions of body, self, and society.

Historians of witchcraft across Europe have postulated that its practice necessitated close-knit communities whose people lived in dependent relationships through kin, marriage, and integrated communal responsibilities and obligations. These relationships generated strong emotions and conflicts which also became breeding grounds for witchcraft accusations.[19] What has gone largely unnoticed, however, is the striking fact that these relations are also of a highly ambivalent nature.[20] Concentrating solely on magic as an explanation of misfortune, much witchcraft research has overlooked the wide range of benevolent magical practices such as healing, treasure hunting, and prophecy which were widely practised in early modern Europe. In my final chapter, I seek to remedy this omission, investigating the power of beneficent magic to explain the adaptability of magical practice to changing historical circumstances, but also, paradoxically, the lessening attraction of witchcraft as a cultural explanation of the world for nineteenth-century people.[21]

Furthermore, many of the healing stories reveal that charms and rituals used for healing were also exploited for harming and that this ambiguity played a major role in witchcraft trials. This ambiguity has remained a little-explored field in witchcraft studies. In this book, I suggest that the study of ambiguity deserves more scholarly attention and that the multivalent meanings of magical practice reflect, and indeed enable, shifting social alliances in close-knit societies.

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[18] Compare for example Eva Labouvie's study of the "less sensational, unspectacular, yes daily confrontation of the inhabitants of the Saarland with events that were interpreted as harmful magic"; *Zauberei und Hexenwerk. Ländlicher Hexenglaube in der frühen Neuzeit*," 15.

[19] Robin Briggs discusses this problem in *Witches and Neighbours*, esp. 221–71.

[20] David Gentilcore, *From Bishop to Witch*; Labouvie, *Zauberei und Hexenwerk*; and M. R. O'Neil, "Sacerdote Ovvero Strione: Ecclesiastical and Supernatural Remedies in 16th-Century Italy."

[21] This tendency is also mirrored in the changing interpretation of folk healers, who remained popular but were seen by the authorities less as offenders against religion and more as unlicensed medical practitioners. See de Blécourt, "Four Centuries of Frisian Witch Doctors" and de Blécourt "'Evil People': A Late Eighteenth-Century Dutch Witch Doctor and His Clients."

Body and Magic

This approach to European witchcraft also questions the very nature of early modern Europeans, including their understandings of body and selfhood. The perspective of embodiment has only rarely been applied to eighteenth-century studies of witchcraft, and this book attempts to fill this significant gap by exploring the question of what kind of body was imagined by contemporaries to be an agent in magic. Historical research has only very recently begun to address the importance of the somatic for an understanding of magical practice,[22] and these studies have often concentrated on either cases of exorcism or the body of the witch.[23] Although differing in their methodologies, these historians convincingly argue that an understanding of religious behaviour must take into consideration the somatic experiences of religious metaphors.

My argument takes this interconnectedness of the spiritual and the material as a starting point. In magic, the body is both matter and meaning; it is not bounded but remains permeable to spiritual and social influences.[24] In this sense, the body social and the body physical were interconnected, and this interrelatedness gave scope to social agency.[25] Mary Douglas' work on the body and its social meanings, particularly the ambiguity of the body's boundaries, remains a useful theoretical starting point for an investigation into the relation between magic and the somatic.[26] Douglas has shown that the protection and the crossings of bodily boundaries need to be understood as social acts. Magical practices are concerned with the regulation of the body and to early modern Europeans, somatic experiences thus reflected wider moral and social relations.[27] It is in this sense that the condition of the

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[22] Michael MacDonald has found similar correspondences between inside and outside and therefore a complete blurring between mental and physical afflictions in England in the second half of the seventeenth century; *Mystical Bedlam*. For France, the permeability of body borders has been noted by Natalie Zemon Davis, "Boundaries and the Sense of Self in Sixteenth-Century France"; Roper on the interconnectedness of spiritual and material in "Exorcism and the Theology of the Body." This point has also been argued by Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women*, 22. In *Witchcraft and Religion*, Christina Larner wrote: "In the pre-industrial world, the close connection between the state of an individual's physical and spiritual health was taken as axiomatic," 141.

[23] Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, 180–84.

[24] Vigdis Broch-Due, "Making Meaning Out Of Matter," 55.

[25] Terence Turner, "Bodies and Anti-Bodies."

[26] Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols* and *Purity and Danger.*

[27] In magic, people display an interconnectedness of body and the social order that Margaret Lock has described as a "somatic mode of attention" to social processes; "Cultivating the Body," 140.

body was perceived as socially meaningful. Milk turning into blood, sudden pain, the wasting of children, and impotence in men were all regarded as such somatic signs. The body was employed in an equally important manner in counter magical rituals: milk, blood, urine, and hair were important ingredients in healing rituals and in love magic. To early modern Europeans, the body seems to have been able to express relationships, and the corporeal state was thereby culturally contextualized.

I shall argue that European magic was based on the concept of an interconnected body and mind and that the study of the meaning of magic must therefore take bodily practice and emotion into consideration.[28] This contextualized character of somatic experiences is realised in the theory of embodiment,[29] which not only describes the social relations of an individual but also addresses the interconnectedness of body and mind. The body is culturally and socially conditioned and its socio-centric nature is expressed in ideas of embodiment. The model of embodiment provides a useful analytical tool to overcome the notion of a dichotomous body and mind which has dominated social theory. Embodiment, then, provides "a new vocabulary for dealing with lived experience that was broken in two only in theory".[30] For witchcraft in particular, it is important to take somatic experiences seriously. Because of magic, the body "withered away", people suffered from "falling sickness", the milk went "dry", and sudden pain invaded and spread through the body like an "elf shot". It is apparent that witchcraft provided an accepted discourse to ascribe meaning to these manifestations of sickness and pain. Such perception also altered the self image to a significant degree. The normal self was rendered dysfunctional, or "ailing", both socially (inability to work) and sexually (impotence). Thus, magical illness represented not just misfortune in an economic sense but also a profound existential crisis.

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[28] In a number of historical studies, the self in the eighteenth century appears to be disconnected from the body: Roy Porter, ed., *Rewriting the Self*; Peter Burke and Roy Porter, eds., *Self, Language and Society*.

[29] The anthropologist Andrew Strathern has emphasized that embodiment includes the analysis of cultural context. He writes: "What is embodied is always some set of meaning, values, tendencies, orientation, that derive from the sociocultural realm"; Strathern, *Body Thoughts*, 197.

[30] Kirsten Hastrup, "Anthropological Knowledge Incorporated. Discussion," in Kirsten Hastrup and P. Hervik (eds), *Social Experience and Anthropological Knowledge*, 228.

Both benign and malign magic employed the body and was acted on the body. Here, I consider the role of body fluids as agents of social exchange between body and society and body parts as seats of personal power that were attacked in witchcraft. Furthermore, a discussion of body magic must include a debate about the relationship between magic and the gendered body.

The body and its somatic states, such as illness, are interpreted in contemporary anthropological literature as signifying very specific cultural, social, or political meanings.[31] This research argues that in being ill, individuals expressed "ill" moral relations or social conditions. These particular relationships were addressed in early modern magic. The disturbed body was interpreted as reflecting disturbed relations, and curative magic constituted an attempt to reverse this disturbance. To early modern Europeans, the body was caught in a variety of power relations.[32] These relationships are considered in the model of embodiment that depicts the body not 'as such' but as something which functions in the context of a precise set of historical circumstances. In eighteenth century Europe, envious and evil people were still held responsible for using magic to cause sudden pain, the drying up of milk, or even impotence. These bodily attacks constituted both physical and social assaults, and thus, the act of witchcraft required a culprit, often in retrospect. To this end, bodily signs were interpreted within the framework of social relations, confirming long-standing social suspicions in the community.

In this manner people could use the discourse of witchcraft to take appropriate social action against the suspect, either in the form of counter magic or in the local court. Discussing illness in court was a public invitation to debate social relations and to bring into the open past grievances which had existed for many years as gossip and rumours. Thus, the victim risked a public confrontation with the culprit should he or she be able to count on communal support. Similar social and moral meanings were displayed in counter magic, as we will see in the discussion of healing rituals. Healing rituals became a central concern to the authorities in the eighteenth century and this will be discussed

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[31] Arthur Kleinman, *The Illness Narratives*; Nancy Sheper-Hughes, "Hungry Bodies, Medicine and the State: Towards a Critical Psychological Anthropology"; and Margaret Lock, Arthur Kleinman, and Veena Das, eds., *Social Suffering*.

[32] Compare, for example, the discussion on gendered bodies and power: Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies*; and Mary E. Fissel, *Vernacular Bodies*.

in Chapter Two. I will argue that this concern not only reflects the attempt of the medical profession to curtail the influence of folk healers as their competitors, but more importantly points to an underlying conflict between different theories of the body. My examination of the narratives concerning magical healing discusses the epic forms of spells used in healing rituals and the way in which both charms and rituals present a form of communication with the supernatural. Magical healing, and implied harming, of children and of cattle is central to eighteenth-century Swedish witchcraft. Here, I explore the gendered nature of healing magic and consider the Enlightenment views of the Lutheran clergy with regard to popular magical healing practices.

Emotions were of vital importance in both healing and harmful magic because they formed a bridge between the individual and society.[33] Eighteenth-century witchcraft cases demonstrate how emotions could signify the embodied nature of the self, as it was believed that emotions could be transmitted by blood or become visible as a rash on the skin.[34] Such visible bodily change signified the emotional state of the offender on the body of the victim. Anger and envy were the key emotions associated with witchcraft and were frequently employed as metaphors for magical acts and power of the self.

Self and Magic

The idea of the person as a historical construct is now generally acknowledged.[35] Witchcraft has been suggested as an ideal field for the exploration of historical subjectivities by early modern historians, and in recent years the field of selfhood has become a central concern in witchcraft studies.[36] In the context of witchcraft, the early modern self

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[33] M. L. Lyon and J. M. Barbalet, "Society's Body."

[34] In her discussion of emotion and self, Rosaldo has described feelings as located in the body and experienced as "embodied thought", for example emotions of anger and shame were experienced as movements in the body; M. Z. Rosaldo, "Toward an Anthropology of Self and Feeling," esp. 143.

[35] It was the work by Marcel Mauss that first advocated this view; "A Category of the Human Mind." For one of the most original studies of personhood in a specific historical period, see Ruth Padel, *In and Out of the Mind*. An excellent critical discussion of current research in the field is provided by Gabriele Jancke and Claudia Ulbrich, eds., *Vom Individuum zur Person*, 7–27.

[36] David Sabean has alerted us to the antagonistic notions of selfhood in popular magic and in learned discourses of the state about the witch in his groundbreaking study *Power in the Blood. Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early Modern Germany*. For

was characterized by the interconnection between body and psyche, as Roper has demonstrated in her analysis of the power of the unconscious and the psychological dynamics of witchcraft.[37] While I build on this historical scholarship with an emphasis on the interconnected body and self, I want to suggest a different approach to the self by focusing on the social dimensions of personhood and magic. Just as bodily borders were permeable in magic, selfhood extended beyond the individual to include other humans, animals, and spirits. This calls for a closer examination of the meaning of the social self in the eighteenth century through a socially oriented methodology. The study of the socio-centric self, however, has been the realm of anthropologists interested in the category of personhood, emotion, and healing practices in communities outside of Europe, and their work has informed my thinking about Swedish witchcraft and selfhood.[38]

The eighteenth century saw multiple discourses of personhood, and popular religious expressions did not change with the onset of the literary and philosophical movement of the Enlightenment.[39] While the Enlightenment altered the legal framework for witchcraft in most European countries by the second half of the eighteenth century, it did not, however, change the experience of self and magic. Magical practices remained tied to a pre-Enlightenment idea of self that was able to communicate with other humans, animals, and the divine. Magic of the self was a social practice grounded in a concept of personhood that saw no division between the spiritual and the somatic, and which acknowledged the interconnectedness of the self with other people and spiritual beings.

In European philosophical thought, the Enlightenment was perceived as marking an important turning point in thinking about the nature of personhood and the self, through the work of Descartes and Kant. For the first time a fundamental dichotomy between body

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an innovative approach integrating psychology and history see Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil* and *Witch Craze*. Purkiss has discussed the self-fashioning and agency of women accused of witchcraft in *The Witch in History* esp. Chapter 6.

[37] Roper states that her interest lies in "the emotional dynamics of envy, dependence and terror"; *Witch Craze. Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany*, xi.

[38] Thomas Csordas, ed., *Embodiment and Experience*; Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins, and Steven Lukes, *The Category of Person*; Catherine Lutz, *Unnatural Emotions*; Geoffrey G. White and John Kirkpatrick, *Person, Self and Experience*; Rosaldo, *Knowledge and Passion* and "Toward an Anthropology of Self and Feeling."

[39] This has recently been argued again by H. C. Erik Midelfort, *Exorcism and Enlightenment*, 6.

and mind was established. Descartes and Kant equated the *Kategorie des Ich*—the 'I'—with consciousness itself. Yet this philosophy contradicted prevailing religious ideas about body and mind. For instance, Kant is known to have commented negatively on the leading Swedish Pietist Emanuel Swedenborg, who believed in familiar spirits and was regarded as a prophet who "conversed with the other world and the deceased."[40] Swedenborg's ideas about the person were grounded in a deeper Scandinavian discourse and Pietism's success was partly rooted in its emphasis on personal religious experience of visions and the significance of dreams. Interestingly, these two aspects of Scandinavian popular culture were also central to magic during the eighteenth century. Therefore, the Cartesian model, regarded as the root of the modern Western concept of person, applies neither to Pietism nor to popular culture in Europe. For instance, Descartes' view on the dichotomy of spiritual and physical, soul and body, was contrary to the popular ideas about the powers of the self as described in cases of sorcery heard at the local courts in the eighteenth century. Although Descartes had lived in Sweden as the guest of Queen Christine from 1649 to his death in 1650, his ideas did not influence the concept of personhood held by the majority of people.

The plurality of discourses of the self is not always evident in historical scholarship. For the eighteenth century in particular, scholars have adhered to the notion of the formation of a bourgeois individual, governed by reason.[41] It is noticeable that this particular argument refers to literary and philosophical sources, thereby often overlooking the manifestations of the self in popular culture and social practice.[42] Yet studies into popular practices of medicine and religion in early modern Europe have shown that the self was firmly embedded in its social and cultural context, which explains the variety of historical experiences of personhood.[43]

In this study, I explore the specific experience of selfhood in magical practices and argue that early modern Swedish popular religion placed the self firmly at the centre of magic and regarded the self as intercon-

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[40] Sigstedt , *The Swedenborg Epic*, 416.

[41] See for an alternative discussion J. Held, "Between the Bourgeois Enlightenment and Popular Culture."

[42] For an insightful discussion of literary sources see Michael C. Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England.*

[43] See, in particular, Barbara Duden, *The Woman beneath the Skin*; Caroline W. Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*; and Piero Camporesi, *The Incorruptible Flesh*.

nected with the community.[44] My starting point for a closer reading of early modern selfhood is the observation made by historians that there are two marked differences between early modern and current theories of selfhood: early modern Europeans accepted both the interconnectedness of body and psyche and the notion of the self as relational. For example, Natalie Zemon Davis has demonstrated the importance of the relational self in sixteenth-century France and David Sabean has shown us how in early modern German communities the notion of personhood was linked to the "matrix of local relations", which was in contrast to the idea of the witch as a "consistent being".[45] In my view, these characteristics of the fluid self were at the heart of magical practices in eighteenth-century Sweden.

Closely linked to the concept of the socio-centric self is the notion of the social nature of the body, and both aspects are central to magical practice. Following on from the pioneering work of Mary Douglas, researchers have pointed out that the meaning of bodily practice is not only socially significant—it is equally important in forming and redefining the self.[46] Thus, the individual constantly converts subjective internal experience (e.g., feeling ill) into cultural discourse (e.g., being intruded on by a witch). In this process, a person redefines his or her moral relations with the community and this transformation gives the individual scope for agency. It is important to note that this relational self is also at the core of European witchcraft.[47]

It is useful to briefly recount some historiographical traditions to explain why these aspects of personhood have not yet been fully

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[44] The Scandinavian pre-Christian concept of mind, spirit or soul is *hug*, which was central to magical belief and practice well into the eighteenth century. The *hug* of a person could take a material form as *hamn* or 'a second body' held responsible for a witch's shape-shifting. I will discuss these concepts in detail in Chapter Two. For a detailed discussion of the Nordic concept of self or soul see the following studies by Dag Strömbäck: "Om Draumkvædet och dess källor"; "The Concept of the Soul in Nordic Tradition"; and *Sejd. Textstudier i nordisk religionshistoria*.

[45] "Virtually all occasions for talking and writing about the self involved a relationship: with God or God and one's confessor, with a patron, with a friend or lover, or especially with one's family and lineage"; Davis, "Boundaries and the Sense of Self in Sixteenth-Century France" p. 53.

[46] See Broch-Due, Rudie and Bleie, eds., *Carved Flesh/Cast Selves*.

[47] For example Christine Stephens understands the social character of the self as being intimately bound to the concept of witchcraft: "In communities or cultures where a divisible sociocentric self-concept prevailed, beliefs in the powers of others to invade self for nefarious purposes would continue to retain their psychological salience and power as indeed they do in some peasant and rural communities today in Europe"; *A'aisa's gifts: a study of magic and the self*, 347.

researched. With an increased interest in the self across academic disciplines,[48] several important historical works have emerged.[49] Earlier historical debates about the nature of personhood were strongly influenced by Marcel Mauss[50] and Norbert Elias[51] and more recently by Foucault.[52] Certainly one of the most influential studies on the development of the modern person has been Elias' work on the process of civilization. There is no doubt that Elias has contributed to historical research by providing a clearer sociological model of the person; in much the same way as Mauss did before him for anthropology, Elias' emphasis on social conditions as factors in changing perceptions of personhood has opened up a new field for historical inquiry.[53]

It is therefore no surprise that Elias' work has also become influential in the Scandinavian context.[54] Löfgren and Frykman have argued in their excellent study of the development of the ideas of personhood in Sweden that it was only in the mid-nineteenth century that the Swedish bourgeoisie began to exercise stronger control over the self and to contrast it consciously with the ideas of personhood in the context of an earlier peasant culture. This new ethic, which Löfgren and Frykman describe as the new notion of a separate, controlled, and internal self,

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[48] See Jeannette Marie Mageo (ed.), *Power and the Self*; and E. Fontinell, "The Return of 'Selves.' For an earlier discussion of some of the philosophical controversies, see A. P. Kerby, "The Language of the Self." Anthropological studies of the self are significant in the edition by P. Heelas and A. Lock, *Indigenous Psychologies: The Anthropology of the Self*.

[49] Porter and Burke, eds., *Language, Society and Self*. Also Porter, ed., *Rewriting the Self*; and Michelle Vovelle, ed., *Der Mensch der Aufklärung*.

[50] For insightful discussions of Mauss' theory of personhood see Carrithers, Collins, and Lukes, eds., *The Category of the Person*, which includes the English translation of Mauss' essay "A Category of the Human Mind," and a series of very interesting essays from cross-cultural perspectives.

[51] Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*.

[52] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation* and *The History of Sexuality*.

[53] The model of civilization has not been without its critics. A number of scholars have pointed out that the subjective experiences of historical subjects need to be taken into account. Eva Österberg, *Mentalities and Other Realities*, in particular the chapter "The Civilizing of Swedish Peasant Society in the Seventeenth Century," 89–121; Michael MacDonald in his preface to *Mystical Bedlam*, xi–xvi. In popular culture, the historical experience of the body was expressed in a different manner from contemporary medical discourses as Barbara Duden reminds us in her insightful study of women's somatic experiences in eighteenth century Germany; *The Woman Beneath the Skin*.

[54] Frykman and Löfgren published in 1979 their book *Den kultiverade människan*, which was in 1987 published in English as *Culture Builders: A Historical Anthropology of Middle-Class Life* by Rutgers University Press. This work follows Elias' theory of a civilizing process and remains so far the most substantial analysis of the development of the modern Swedish personality.

was evident in changed approaches to personal hygiene, and contrasted remarkably with previous ideas of personhood. Both authors argue that before the nineteenth-century there was a close link between the physical and the social self,[55] and the inner self was not confined to the individual. Instead, it could transcend the body and become socially effective and powerful by exercising power over others in healing or harming. The exploration of an early modern understanding of personhood as essentially socio-centric, divisible, and fluid, calls for the analysis of magical practices.

Self-transcendence, soul journeys, and body metamorphosis express a cultural concept of a person that contrasts fundamentally with the Enlightenment's philosophical notions of people as free, rational, and autonomous subjects.[56] The prominent role played by emotions in witchcraft further strengthens this contrast between early modern personhood and Enlightenment discourse. The power of emotions and desires was explicitly acknowledged in Swedish semantics of the powerful self. When studying eighteenth-century witchcraft, we encounter a model of self that differs significantly from the modern idea of personhood. The most striking feature of this self is the interconnectedness of matter and spirit. I will explore this interdependency between the body and the mind through theories of sickness and healing to show how the embodied self played a central role in European magic. The vulnerability of the self was narrated in witchcraft as stories of sickness, ailing, and death. Witchcraft was still regarded in the eighteenth century as a widely accepted idiom for personal power capable of manipulating interpersonal relationships. Such a concept of personhood rendered soul journeys possible and ascribed spiritual significance to emotions and dreams.

In contrast to the early modern profound interconnectedness of body and self, our analytical tools as well as our narrative conventions of analysis require us to separate these aspects neatly into different arguments and chapters. For this reason, the following chapters highlight specific aspects of this interconnected world; however, it is important to

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[55] Frykman and Löfgren, *Culture Builders*, 190.

[56] The distinction body-mind and subjectivity-objectivity has been critically discussed by Kirsten Hastrup, *A Passage to Anthropology*, 77–98. These issues of fluid identity have been discussed for the medieval period by Caroline Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity*. For the development of the bourgeois idea of self in Scandinavia, see Löfgren and Frykman, *Culture Builders*, 221–63. See also Richard van Dülmen, *Die Entdeckung des Individuums: 1500–1800*.

remember that this is an artificial division. Despite this segmentation, I hope to do justice to an eighteenth-century notion of a self that had not yet been affected by the Cartesian split and to open up a new view on early modern popular culture, in which magic represented a persuasive and powerful discourse integrating body, self, and society.

CHAPTER ONE

HONOUR AND SOCIAL CONTROL IN WITCHCRAFT TRIALS

Eighteenth-century Swedish society was built on a stratified system of honour which could be politically challenged in formal arenas like the court, or through informal channels of gossip. In this chapter, I argue that trials of witchcraft reflected these interlocking mechanisms of social control.[1] Both court discourse and popular magic were essentially discourses about causality which focused on social reputations. Indeed, witchcraft narratives at the court were structured around images and metaphors in order to debate the honour of the suspect. This meant that magical power was equated with intent and this was the implicit assumption on which accusation, witnesses' testimonies, and defence or confession was based. The evidence produced by all narratives was expressed in images which rendered the supposed evil or benign intentions of the suspect visible. A denial of evil intent was the best defence; this reflected innocence and good moral standing. Börta Andersdotter, for example, defended her life-long healing activities by asserting that she had not done anything bad, but always helped people: "She had always thought that she did good if she helped people in need".[2]

Early modern legal procedures were public events and in many aspects resembled a theatrical stage. The audience for whom the narratives of accusation, witness, and defence were framed were local communities and judges, not the king or a royal commission. It was in front of their neighbours, kin, and servants that all parties struggled over the meaning and honour of the actors involved. Participants inserted into narratives their gendered code of honour, their notions of

[1] For an overview of early modern Swedish society see J. Behre, L.-O. Larsson, and Eva Österberg, *Sveriges historia 1521–1809*; and Paul Douglas Lockhart and Paul Lockhart, *Sweden in the Seventeenth Century*. On gender in early modern Sweden, compare Österberg, Eva, ed., *Jämmerdal och fröjdesal.* An excellent local study of early modern gender and social relations in Helsingborg is provided by Solveig Fagerlund, *Handel och Vandel*.

[2] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1722, Älvsborg county, Ale hundred, bailiff Johan Hallberg vs Börta Andersdotter (Arens 3:4).

proof and evidence, and conflicts between families, their neighbours, and servants which spanned generations. At the court, a social drama evolved which involved judges, the accuser, the accused, and male and female witnesses. The issues in this play were power and honour. The final act consisted of the definition of the true meaning of a suspected magical act and the punishment of any offender.[3]

Narratives presented to the court were part of the local talk about people's magical abilities. Court depositions, in contrast to stories of magic in a non-legal context, were narratives shaped from the different positions of the narrator as plaintiff, witness, or defendant.[4] It is therefore useful to discuss the rules of the court genre, and to explain the historical background of the local courts. We need to know, for example, how trials were conducted at the assizes and how witchcraft accusations were initiated. Likewise, it is important to discuss the role of witnesses and that of the clergy and other officials in witch trials. During the eighteenth century, significant changes can be seen in the nature of sorcery trials in Sweden. Most importantly, we see a quantitative increase in the number of accusations, and especially an increase in cases of magical healing and the increased involvement of Lutheran priests. The influence of the clergy extended beyond the court and therefore it is necessary to describe the wider range of ecclesiastical initiatives intended to control magical practices and popular morality. But before we can turn to a discussion of narrative structures of accusations, witnesses' testimonies and defences, I will briefly describe the range of sorcery cases brought before the Appellate Court of Göta.

During the eighteenth century, profound changes took place in the sorcery trials of the Appellate Court of Göta. In this period, sorcery trials did not decline but, on the contrary, increased sharply. Around three out of every four known cases in the Appellate Court of Göta were heard during the eighteenth century, with more than half after

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[3] As W. I. Miller has noted, sorcery accusations created a causal chain between the accused and the misfortune. "Dreams, Prophecy and Sorcery," 111.

[4] For a discussion of witchcraft accusations and symbolic systems, see Gabor Klaniczay, "Hungary: The Accusations and the Universe of Popular Magic," 237–38. Marion Gibson has discussed witchcraft narratives in pamphlets for early modern England; see *Reading Witchcraft: Stories of Early English Witches*, Chapter 1: "Ghost-writers—Dialogue, Interrogation and the Production of the Records of Witchcraft," 13–49; and also Lawrence Normand and Gareth Roberts, "Introduction: History, Witchcraft, Texts," in their *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, 1–6.

1734.[5] This important observation sheds a very different light on the eighteenth century and witchcraft research, as the eighteenth century appears as a period of continuing magical beliefs. It is characterized firstly by the dramatic increase in the total number of cases in the eighteenth century; secondly by the increase in the proportion of trials concerning non-*maleficium* cases; and thirdly by the change in the gender profile of the accused. The material at the Appellate Court of Göta between 1634 and 1779 encompassed 515 trials.[6] When this period is broken down into ten-year intervals, the increase during the eighteenth century becomes strikingly apparent.[7] The reason for this sharp increase in cases before the assizes was the disproportionate increase in charges of sorcery that did not involve any actual harm, but consisted of healing, finding treasures and so on. A striking feature for the eighteenth century was the dramatic increase in cases concerning white magic after a change of law in 1734. At the same time, the number of *maleficium* cases stayed relatively constant and penalties became much milder.[8] It is apparent that the courts did not only debate maleficent magic (*trolldom*) but also cases of benign magic such as healing (*signe, lövjeri*) and divination (*spådom*). Divination cases often concerned the prediction of the recovery or demise of a sick person. In 1768, a male servant reported as witness to the court that he had met the accused Stina Linneqwist one early morning in February of that year. During the conversation with her, he had mentioned that his master, the farmer Nils Joensson, was currently sick, and asked Stina whether she thought that he would recover again. Without hesitation, Stina answered "that he shall certainly do so".[9]

Associated with an increase of accusations of benign magic in the Göta Appellate Court was an increase of the number of male plaintiffs, especially priests and bailiffs.[10] In Småland in 1768, for example, the

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[5] Per Sörlin, *Trolldoms- och vidskepelseprocesserna*, 24.

[6] Sörlin, *Trolldoms- och vidskepelseprocesserna*, 16.

[7] Compare statistics given in ibid., 22: cases of witchcraft and superstition in Göta Appeal Court: 1635–1644: 14, 1645–1654: 17; 1655–1664: 13; 1665–1674: 39; 1675–1684: 6; 1685–1694: 20; 1695–1704: 37, 1705–1714: 21; 1715–1724: 32; 1725–1734: 30; 1735–1744: 55; 1745–1754: 69; 1755–1764: 77; 1765–1774: 58; 1775–1779: 27.

[8] Ibid., 35–36.

[9] RA, GHA, HRT, 1768, Västergötland, Skaraborgs county, Vartofta hundred, pastor Anders Holm vs Stina Linneqwist (Arens 4:32).

[10] Sörlin, *Trolldoms- och vidskepelseprocesserna*, 85.

bailiff brought a case against a man accused of using magic.[11] Pastors were more likely to bring known healers to court and this was often a reflection of the influence of Enlightenment thought on the clergy.[12] In other cases, the sexton played a very active part as key witness against the accused healer. For example, the sexton Anders Wetterlind reported to the court how in the previous year he had been by chance in the house of Bengt Bengtsson where he had met Sophia Räf and her daughter, both of whom were suffering from toothache for which they sought help from the renowned healer Stina Linneqwist. The sexton explained that the woman healer said a charm and preformed a ritual which, regrettably, he could not see "because *hustru* Linneqwist turned her back to this witness".[13] Secular and ecclesiastical authorities became increasingly active in tracking down magical practitioners and taking them to court. These cases only rarely concerned maleficent magic and were on the whole a widespread campaign against all supernatural practices and directed especially against healing magic, the location of lost property, and other non-harmful magic. With this broadening of the magical spectrum of cases indicted at the court, many more male magical practitioners came to the attention of the authorities.

This leads us to consider the gender relation between accusers and accused.[14] Some interesting observations can be made for the composition of sorcery trials in the eighteenth century, the most striking of which is that after 1734 the number of men accused of superstition nearly equaled the number of women.[15] It is worth noting that women still formed the majority of those being accused of *maleficium.*

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[11] RA, GHA, HRT, 1769, Småland, Kronoberg county, Norrvidige hundred, bailiff Alexander Lagergren vs Gumme Johansson (Arens 4:37).

[12] RA, GHA, HRT, 1768, Västergötland, Skaraborgs county, Vartofta hundred, pastor Anders Holm vs Stina Linneqwist (Arens 4:32).

[13] RA, GHA, HRT, 1768, Västergötland, Skaraborgs county, Vartofta hundred, pastor Anders Holm vs Stina Linneqwist (Arens 4:32).

[14] There is considerable historical debate on the issue of gender and witchcraft. See, for example, Susanna Burghartz, "The Equation of Women and Witches"; Alison Rowlands, "Seduction, Poison and Magical Theft: Gender and Contemporary Fantasies of Witchcraft," in her *Witchcraft Narratives in Germany*, 135–79; and Willem de Blécourt, "The Making of the Female Witch." On the emerging topic of masculinity and witchcraft see E. J. Kent, "Masculinity and Male Witches"; Lara Apps and Andrew Gow, "Secondary Targets? Male witches on Trial," in their *Male Witches in Early Modern Europe*, 43–64; and Antero Heikkinen and Timo Kervinen, "Finland: The Male Domination."

[15] Sörlin, *Trolldoms- och vidskepelseprocesserna*, 109.

The Swedish Jurisdictional System: Courts of Appeal and Assize Courts

Before we begin to analyze cases heard at the courts we need to understand how the appellate and assize courts worked and, more importantly, what function the local court had in the local society of the eighteenth century. The Appellate Court of Göta (*Göta hovrätt*) was established in 1634 in Jönköping for the provinces of Götaland (Östergötland, Öland, Småland, Västergötland, Dalsland, Värmland). In 1645, the jurisdiction of the court was extended with the addition of the province of Halland and in 1658 it was extended again to the former Danish provinces of Skåne, Blekinge, and Bohuslän. In 1816, the province of Värmland was transferred from the jurisdiction of the Appeal Court of Götaland to the jurisdiction of the Appeal Court of Svealand.[16]

Between 1634 and 1779, the Appeal Court of Göta was the highest court for sorcery trials for the southern and middle Swedish provinces.[17] Local assize courts were required to send transcripts of each trial to the appeal court. These were not appeals in the formal sense, but simply a form of central control to oversee and correct the activities of the local courts. The geographical area which composed the Appellate Court of Göta consisted of several counties, stretching over south and middle Sweden. Sorcery trials were relatively evenly spread throughout these counties in relation to their populations.[18]

Courts of Appeal held the legal competencies to consider appeal and complaints about legal procedures. Furthermore, the Appeal Court was the first court for blasphemy and high treason. It also presented *a forum privilegatium* for the aristocracy in some cases, as, for instance, civil cases concerning real estate, inheritance, testament, and bankruptcy. It was the court of first recourse for crimes such as the failure of justice or neglect in office committed by bureaucrats or public servants. The Appeal Court of Göta also held competence for witchcraft trials until 1779, the year of the abolition of the death penalty for witchcraft by King Gustav III.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the law contained a paragraph on bewitching, while non-harmful magic was left to the church courts. This changed when the law was reformed and a new

[16] Jan Eric Almquist, *Svensk rättshistoria*.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Per Sörlin, *Trolldoms- och visdskepelseprocesserna*. Sörlin offers very interesting statistics on the number of sorcery trials and the total population by county on page 25.

paragraph on breaches of the sabbath was introduced in 1665. Superstition was newly classified as a serious sin and consequently forbidden. In 1687, this paragraph was slightly reformulated and completed with precise specifications of penalty: "Superstition brought fines, prison on water and bread, the gauntlet or a flogging at the pillory, depending on the offence and the person".[19] Until the new law in 1734, all crimes concerning magic were based on the regulation from 1687. The 1734 law brought some significant changes, but the death penalty continued, albeit narrowed to the special offence of pact with the Devil. Only in 1779 was this provision changed; the contract with the Devil was no longer a capital crime but degraded to superstition.[20] This brought to an end the death penalty for witchcraft in Sweden. At the same time, the appellate courts no longer required the assizes to send in a copy of each trial concerning magic.

During the eighteenth century, penalties for witchcraft included death, corporal punishment, expulsion, jail, fines, and public penance in church. After 1734, more cases of superstition were heard and the penalties became milder. For example, in 1768 a woman healer was fined ten daler silver coins for "using superstitious means" and one of her patients was fined five daler silver coins for seeking her help.[21] Two other women healers were condemned to pay a fine for the use of "superstition and the misuse of God's name", but because they were deemed by the court to be too poor, the sentence was amended to imprisonment on bread and water for twelve days.[22] In general, the appellate court eased penalties which had been inflicted by the assize court. In 1769, for example, a man by the name of Gumme Johansson wrote a letter to the appeal court to ask to have his fine of forty silver daler changed into a corporeal punishment and imprisonment on bread and water because he was so poor. The response of the court was to reduce his fine to twenty daler silver coins.[23] The death penalty was

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[19] Ibid., 44.

[20] It was only in the year 1864 that the law finally defined superstition as fraud (ibid., p. 69, n. 16). The increase of fraud cases in the eighteenth century is also mentioned by Linda Oja, "The Superstitious Other," 73.

[21] RA, GHA, HRT, 1768, Västergötland, Skaraborgs county, Vartofta hundred, pastor Anders Holm vs Stina Linneqwist (Arens 4:32).

[22] RA, GHA, HRT, 1756, Småland, Vista hundred, city of Gränna, case against widow Brita Månsdotter et al. (Arens 3:62).

[23] RA, GHA, HRT, 1769, Småland, Kronoberg county, Norrvidige hundred, bailiff Alexander Lagergren vs Gumme Johansson (Arens 4:37).

only applied to serious cases of bewitchment. Death sentences during the eighteenth century were as common as in the seventeenth century, but the Göta Appellate Court did not confirm the majority of them and only two death penalties were confirmed after 1700.[24]

Witchcraft trials were heard at the local assize courts under the jurisdiction of the Appellate Court. It is therefore important to understand what the function of the local court was and the ways in which honour and 'heated' words were employed as local strategies to influence the outcome of sorcery trials. The local court witnessed battles over the meaning of narratives of a magical event. In order to understand its determinations we must ascertain a good understanding of how the court worked and the ways in which sorcery trials were conducted. It is necessary to establish who the audience at the court was and what influence ordinary villagers could exercise when they were called as witnesses to testify to the reputation of the defendant. Furthermore, we need to ask what powers the local authorities—pastors, sheriffs, and bailiffs—held in regard to witchcraft trials. Finally, it will be necessary to discuss the concept of honour, which was so central to Swedish witch trials.

In Götaland, county courts were a continuation from Germanic traditions of the court of the people (*folketsting*). Jurisdictional districts of hundreds (*härad*) were divided into quarters (*fjärding*) under the presidency of a district judge (*fjärdingshövding*). The law of 1734 defined the hierarchy of the courts as follows:

> the first court in the country is the assize court (*häradsrätt*). There judges the judge (*häradshövding*) and twelve peasants, who live in this jurisdictional district (*härad*). Those twelve are called jurors (*häradsnamnd*).[25]

From 1686, the law demanded that a special church service (*tingspredikan*) was to be held before every court session.[26] The majority of cases were heard at assize courts, and given that in 1760 only 9% of the population lived in cities, this is not surprising.[27] The precise relation between city courts and assizes has been estimated for the period 1635–1699 as 21% of cases at city courts and 76% of cases at assizes (with three

[24] Sörlin, *Trolldoms- och visdskepelseprocesserna*, 58–60, 167.
[25] Almquist, *Svensk rättshistoria*, 13.
[26] N. Edling and W. Ljusterdal, eds, *Vendels sockens domböcker*, 18.
[27] Sörlin, *Trolldoms- och vidskepelseprocesserna*, 23.

cases unknown), while for the period 1700–1779 the distribution was 12% at city courts and 88% at assizes.[28]

For an understanding of these trials it is necessary to examine the social relationships between the plaintiff and defendant. We can state that the main four ways to initiate trials were: accusations by villagers, follow-up trials, other crime which revealed some use of magic, and the initiative of royal officials or priests. Furthermore, we need to consider that in many cases the exact initiation cannot be reconstructed.[29] We further need to note that the number of sorcery trials originating in these categories changed remarkably between 1634 and 1779. It emerges as a clear trend that the number of trials originating from other criminal charges decreased significantly in the period from 1634–1754. While in the early period from 1635–1674 this category accounted for 25% of magic trials, in the period 1735–1754, its share fell to 10%. The strongest increase, on the other hand, was in the category of priests as initiators, from 4% in 1635–1674, to 11% in the period 1675–1734 and to 19% in the period 1735–1754.[30] Sorcery trials originating from other criminal charges ceased completely in the latter period and the number of unknown origin increased, while trials initiated by royal officials and trials initiated by private people stayed remarkably stable.

More importantly, the majority of accusations did not concern *maleficium* (125 accused individuals between 1635–1754) or *diabolicum* (153 accused individuals in this period), but non-harmful magic (502 accused individuals).[31] Extensive witch hunts in the area of the Göta Appeal Court took place only in the province of Bohuslän 1669–1672, where more than one hundred individuals were involved and twenty-one people executed. Instead, most cases involved only one to three accused individuals.[32] The plaintiff and defendant usually knew each other, while accusations within one household or kinship were rare.[33] Generally, there was a difference in status between accuser and accused. In nearly all cases, the plaintiffs occupied a higher social position than the defendants. Amongst the plaintiffs, landowning peasants were in the majority. This social gap between plaintiff and defendant was true for

[28] Ibid., 24.
[29] Sörlin estimates this figure to be one quarter; ibid., 86.
[30] Ibid., 85.
[31] Ibid., 35.
[32] Ibid., 34.
[33] Ibid., 111.

both sexes; women acting as accusers had a higher social status than the suspected women.[34] In the county of Kalmar, a pastor's widow accused two female servants of fraud in pretending to heal her sick daughter in 1757.[35]

A gender analysis of accusers and accused provides further interesting insights. In cases of *maleficium*, 23% of the accused were men and 77% were women. In more than half of the cases, men and women were accused of harming people. Both men and women were also accused of harming animals with the help of magic. In cases of food production (milk, butter, beer, brandy), women were more likely to be suspected than men. And only women were accused of harming children. Men were more likely (in relative numbers) to be accused of harming other men rather than women with maleficent magic. But in total numbers, more *maleficium* against people was done by women, and more men than women complained of being harmed by it. Gender differences were less marked in cases of benign magic. After the introduction of the new law in 1734, men nearly equaled women in being suspected of superstition.[36] These gender-based differences will be analyzed in terms of work and honour below.

How were cases of magic initiated during the early modern period? During the medieval and early modern period, the Nordic tradition perceived a court trial as a conflict between two parties, rather than between the state and an individual.[37] However, during the later part of the eighteenth-century, this character changed slowly and in sorcery trials, secular authorities, such as the bailiff, the sheriff, and the local clergy, were very active in taking such matters to court. Most cases seem to have existed as rumour and gossip in the community until priest, bailiff, or sheriff heard of the matter. Sometimes people went directly to the pastor or the sheriff; often vicars or sextons were the informers. This is not surprising, since one of the functions of bailiffs, pastors, and sheriffs was to be knowledgeable about the matters discussed in the local community. This often happened in informal ways through daily gossip and conversation. The priest then took the initiative to generate a court trial. Thus, in the case against Nils Jönsson in 1769,

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[34] Ibid., 112.

[35] RA,GHA, HRT, 1757, Kalmar county, Märtha Beata Lundwall vs Anna Sophia Adamsdotter (Arens 4:5).

[36] Sörlin, *Trolldoms- och visdskepelseprocesserna*, 129.

[37] Ankarloo, *Att stilla herrevrede*, 123.

the pastor had sent a letter to the court, demanding his arrest. The pastor wrote:

> Several villagers from Kiöpinge came to me to indict a lad by the name of Nils Jönsson, for both cheating and superstition employing rude utterances. Therefore they keep him under arrest. Our wish is that the sheriff and bailiff Lundberg would please arrange for the named lad to be taken into custody until the matter is resolved legally at the local court.[38]

The community and the pastor played a significant role in bringing cases to the local court, but how influential were local people in the assizes? To answer this question we need to consider the character of local courts in the eighteenth century, and discuss how legal and social powers were put into effect.

Secular Courts as Instruments of Social Control

During the early modern period, secular courts remained important instruments of social control, but their nature changed significantly during the late sixteenth to mid-eighteenth centuries.[39] Secular courts transformed from a public space for resolving interpersonal conflicts in the late medieval period to a place that, by the mid-eighteenth century, increasingly focused on conflicts between individuals and the state.[40] Criminal cases brought before the courts therefore did not just reflect what happened in society, but were rather indicative of the nature of social control and power relations.

This changing nature of social control is reflected in the changing nature of magic-related offences brought to the local courts belonging to the jurisdiction of the Appellate Court of Göta between 1634 and 1779. The transformation between the two phases was signified by the new law in 1734. Interpersonal conflicts, as expressed in *maleficium*, dominated the cases heard during the seventeenth century, while after the law of 1734 cases of non-harmful magic increased drastically. In cases of *maleficium*, accusations of witchcraft did not always link very

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[38] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 4, 1769, Skåne, Kristianstad county, Gards hundred, case vs. Nils Jönsson (Arens 4:35).

[39] Österberg, "Criminality, Social Control, and the Early Modern State," 85; Österberg and Lindström, *Crime and Social Control in Medieval and Early Modern Swedish Towns*; Österberg and Sogner, eds, *People meet the Law.*

[40] Österberg, "Criminality," 92.

clearly the description of the misfortune to the suspect. Gregory has argued that accusations of *maleficum* in England in the seventeenth century were formulated very vaguely, starting with the description of the misfortune and only later tracing the link to the suspect.[41] In witchcraft accusations, the named conflict was indeed often banal, but frequently tensions had existed for many years because plaintiffs were not always interested in bringing the full scale of their conflicts out into the open. Bengt Liungqwist reported to the court in 1756 that three years ago one of the lambs of the accused Maria Månsdotter had crossed the meadow into his flock of sheep and his wife had driven it away. A short time later he heard Maria saying that the one who had driven away her lambs would receive his just payment. Three weeks later, Bengt's wife began to suffer from an eye disease and became so blind that she could not find her own way around for six weeks.[42]

Non-harmful magic such as healing, treasure-finding, and the recovery of lost or stolen goods, did not concern interpersonal conflicts but instead signified conflict between lay people and the clergy with regard to spiritual authority. So, for instance, in Luggude hundred in 1715, when the priest Samuel Winding denounced the wife of Hans Hansson in Assartorp, deposing that when she had taken the Lord's Supper she had used superstition because she had worn an amulet with the name of Jesus written on it, which she was said to have received from a wise woman. The Göta Appeal Court acquitted the woman from the punishment the local court had sentenced her to, "since Hans Hansson and his wife cannot be convicted of having used this lead-plate".[43]

Here, religious authority asserted its right to punish spiritual disobedience. The boundaries of order had been redrawn. This supports Österberg's hypothesis that in this period the court was less the stage for the playing out of social conflicts within the local community, and more an arena for the expression of conflict between the individual and the early modern state. This can be clearly seen in the new meaning magical healing acquired at the court. Benign magic was not a crime within popular discourse, a view expressed by many of the suspected healers. In medieval Scandinavian law, only the use of magic to harm

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[41] See A. Gregory, "Witchcraft, Politics and 'Good Neighbourhood'".

[42] RA, GHA, HRT, 1756, Småland, Vista hundred, city of Gränna, case against widow Brita Månsdotter et al. (Arens 3:62).

[43] GHA, Brottmålsprotokoll AII:9, Luggude hundred, Malmöhus county, 1715, Priest Samuel Winding vs. Hans Hansson and his wife.

a person was a criminal offence and, therefore, any accusation of magic at the court had to prove infliction of harm in order to be an acknowledged case. But with change, in particular the promulgation of the law in 1734, cases now brought to the court had to prove superstition in order to be successful.

The initial accusation was only the beginning of a thorough investigation into the suspect's honour. After the first hearings of the original accusation, the circle of witnesses would be widened. The bailiff, sheriff, and priest would invite more witnesses, particularly married women, to testify to the suspect's reputation.[44] At sorcery trials, this situation was created in retrospect as a kind of indirect proof. This was a social act, and witnesses as well as accuser and suspect recreated their versions of events accordingly. In any case, the reputation and honour of the suspect were the ultimate proof of guilt or innocence. People with bad reputations (*elak människa*) were thought to be more likely to cause harm, and in situations of tension their words or gestures could acquire dangerous meaning. Reputation was constructed in public talk about a person, and this is often described rather narrowly by contemporary scholarship as gossip.

Gossip and Hearsay in Sorcery Trials

Words carried not only great power in the context of magic but also in gossip and slander, two discourses about honour and power which reflected the moral order. Speech was a direct physical threat in a double sense because it could magically destroy a person's self and in gossip it could damage his or her social reputation. Although only twelve cases of witchcraft were initiated as slander cases in the Göta Appellate Court, almost every case involved damaging the reputation of the suspect. In the narrative form of court trials, this gossip was present in the form of witnesses' evidence. Witnesses' depositions did not merely affirm the details of the original event, but often went much further to a general discussion of the suspect's honour. In these narratives, gossip and rumour became significant political strategies to damage a person's honour, and ultimately their power. Such an attack on one's honour was particularly dangerous in close-knit societies

[44] A similar situation has been described for Scottish witchcraft trials where the initial accusations were merely a 'trigger': Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion*, 75.

where personal relationships and their maintenance constituted public order.[45] For Scandinavian societies, the legal importance of gossip is very clearly expressed in those sagas where the manipulation of community discourse, that is gossip, was vital for the outcome of lawsuits in medieval Iceland. Gossip was a powerful public institution, and this was particularly true for offences where nobody accepted responsibility, as was the case in sorcery. Scholars have pointed out that gossip was the most important way to blame somebody for a secret offence.[46] If gossip was legally formalized as slander, this reflected the deep concern of early modern people to defend their reputation and clear their name in public. If a person's reputation remained tainted, then such suspicion resulted in social sanctions often continuing for a lifetime and affecting other members of the household.

Women in particular were believed to access an alternative form of power through gossip because they were excluded from formal positions of political power in the local community, as for example in early modern Sweden where local politics in the village assemblies were dominated by men from socially influential groups.[47] As Phyllis Mack wrote of prophetic women, heated speech reflected the power of words, and women's words in particular were perceived as possessing actual physical power.[48] Steve Hindle reached a similar conclusion, arguing that women's public speech, in this case not as prophecy but as gossip, was perceived as fundamentally dangerous to the social order.[49] In his analysis of the shaming of Margaret Knowsley, Hindle argues that gossip is closely related to gender and authority in early modern society and represents an important form of subversion. In a patriarchal society,

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[45] On the power of words and speech see Steve Hindle, "The Shaming of Margaret Knowsley: Gossip, Gender and the Experience of Authority in Early Modern England," 407–08. Works on gossip run across the disciplines. See, for literature studies in particular, E. B. Gelles, "Gossip: An Eighteenth-Century Case". For anthropological discussions of the subject see M. Gluckman "Gossip and Scandal," 307–16; R. Paine, "What's Gossip About?"; P. J. Wilson "Filcher of Good Names"; S. E. Merry "Rethinking Gossip and Scandal"; L. Gowing, "Gender and the Language of Insult in Early Modern London"; Bernard Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England*.

[46] Miller, "Dreams, Prophecy and Sorcery," esp. 110.

[47] Compare Peter Aaronsson, *Bönder för politik. Det lokala självstyret som social arena i tre Smålands socknar, 1680–1850.* (=Bibliotheca Historica Lundensis, 72) Lund, Lund University Press, 1992. Women's strategies in early modern Swedish courts have been discussed in Solvi Sogner, Marie Lindstedt and Hilde Sandvik, "Women in Court".

[48] Mack, *Visionary Women*, 32.

[49] Hindle, "The Shaming of Margaret Knowsley," 392–408.

women's speech was necessarily seen as politically charged; it was one of the few ways in which women could influence public opinion. In this context, gossip provided women with some degree of political power in early modern society.

While it is true that women exercised power through gossip because they had no access to formal power institutions, such as the village assembly and the assize court, we must not overlook the fact that men also engaged in gossip. The Appellate Court of Göta holds many testimonies by male witnesses where hearsay and gossip were referred to. Men testified to the honour of the suspect by making reference to public opinion or hearsay about the magical abilities of the person concerned. For example, Håkan Pihl reported to the court that rumour held that the accused Karena could bless (*signa*) "and that she even wishes that her bed and she herself shall sink into Hell if she had used any witchcraft (*trolldomb*)". He added that further details about her blessings were not known to him.[50] In this light, gossip was not simply a powerful tool for women to undermine patriarchy; it was also used to bring about the conviction and imprisonment of women suspected of witchcraft, and was employed by male witnesses. Thus, gossip was a powerful institution within the community, across both sexes. Although represented as a female device, it was used by all socially weaker members of the community, regardless of gender, to exercise power or to avoid direct personal responsibility by referring to hearsay.

At the local court, gossip was referred to by both women and men as being public opinion; in this way, witnesses furnished their own testimonies with a more powerful backing. This tactic was especially employed if the witness confirmed the accusations against the plaintiff. To avoid a possible counter-accusation of slander, people choose to hide behind public opinion by declaring that they had heard that such and such a person could bless, but that they themselves did not know whether it was true or not. Likewise they could state that "I cannot deny having heard that such and such person can bless". For example, Anders Persson reported to the court that he had only sought the service of a woman healer because of a widespread rumour that she was very experienced

[50] Lunds Landsarkivet (LLA) AIa:14, Frosta häradsrätts arkiv, domböcker vid lagtima ting 1732–1734, Malmöhus county, Frosta hundred 1732, case vs Karena Lassesdotter.

in the art of healing.[51] In contrast, if a witness did not want to support the accusation, he or she would refer to public opinion by stating that they had never heard that such and such could bless.

In early modern societies, the perceived verbal aggression of women was associated with cursing, and rendered them particularly vulnerable to *maleficium* suspicions.[52] Women's speech was deemed dangerous and forceful because it reflected their supposed inability to control their emotions; it was 'heated speech'. In witchcraft, the link between emotion, word, and magical act was readily made. The Swedish word for cursing (*hota*), was closely related to the word for heated, fiery and passionate (*hetsig*). This affinity between anger and the physical effects of words can be seen in the defence of Ellna Hansdotter and many more in her situation who confessed that she might have said these things but insisted that it had happened in anger and that she did not mean it.[53] The woman's line of defence concerned the intent underlying her speech, and thus her responsibility for the physical effects of her uttered words. In order to have a magical effect, curses did not need to be concise and indeed most curses were deliberately kept as vague threats such as "You will see what you will get". Only in retrospect, when harm had already occurred, was meaning ascribed to prior words and gestures. The tracing of a plausible link between words and magical acts could be done informally or in the more formal legal environment of the court.

Witnesses' testimonies played an important role in the construction of the honour of the accused and consequently in the verdict of the court. They certainly deserve greater historical attention. As with Larner's observations of Scottish trials, Swedish witnesses testified exclusively on the reputation of the suspect rather than on the initial episode brought forward by the accuser.[54] Long-withheld accusations, particularly by women, were finally brought to light, often after many

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[51] RA, GHA, HRT, 1768, Västergötland, Skaraborgs county, Vartofta hundred, pastor Anders Holm vs Stina Linneqwist (Arens 4:32).

[52] Linda Oja suggests for Sweden that the relatively high number of women accused in witchcraft trials could be explained by the fact that their perceived verbal aggression made it more likely for *maleficium* to be attributed to them. Men, in contrast, would use physical violence to resolve conflicts. Linda Oja, "Kvinnligt, manligt, magiskt," esp. 50–53. This has also been argued by Eva Labouvie, "Männer im Hexenprozess."

[53] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1728, October, Skåne, county of Malmöhus, hundred of Luggude, squire A. J. Morman vs Ellna Hansdotter (Arens 3:10).

[54] Larner, *Enemies of God*.

years, through their witness' depositions. This behaviour seems to have been typical for women. Women were more likely to hold back accusations and subsequently bring them forward in somebody else's trial (women figure only seldom as direct accusers in magic trials) and were also more likely to give evidence favorably on the reputation of a healer. This tactic resembles the use of hearsay in that it shows that people were very careful about bringing trials to the court or making direct accusations as witnesses.

It must be noted that although the majority of accusers were men, the majority of witnesses were women. Most of these women were married and their testimonies concerned the reputation of the accused, rather than the precise incident in question. Karna Persdotter was tried for superstition in 1728, being accused of having used magical means to change a farm-hand's mind so that he would be prevented from leaving and would remain on a farm.[55] The court questioned other witnesses about the reputation of Karna Persdotter and asked them to testify about her magical activities in the past. Some came forward with long-withheld accusations of maleficent magic which they claimed was caused by Karna. In these cases, the witnesses' testimonies followed the narrative structure of *maleficium*.[56] For instance, it was reported that failure to lend flour to Karna had led to death and disease in livestock. But other witnesses claimed that Karna used her abilities with benevolent intentions. In another case from the same region, witnesses recalled events independent from the initial episode, testifying about the magical reputation of the accused woman Boell Persdotter:

> Anders Svensson declared that five or six years ago he came out early on Walpurgis morning to look for his ox. There, before sunrise, he saw this woman [the accused Boell] coming out of the northern door of the cow shed and going out into the fields which belong to a farm owned by the crown. She sat down as if she wanted to cast water for a little while then got up and jumped three times forth and back across the fields. Then she sat down at the same spot again for a while. Finally she jumped on one foot over the fields. As she became aware of the witness, she went back the same way she had come.[57]

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[55] GHA, HRT, RA, vol. 2, 1728, Skåne, hundred of Luggude, Malmöhus county, case Jöns Truedsson vs Karna Persdotter (Arens 3:9).

[56] This structure has been outlined by Klaniczay, "Hungary: The Accusations and the Universe of Popular Magic".

[57] Luggude hundred, Malmöhus county, case vs hustru Boell Persdotter, Luggude häradsrättsarkiv, dombok AI:19 and AI:20, LLA, 20.6.1726; 18.6.1726; 15.3.–16.3.1727.

In this narrative, the witness reported suspicious behaviour which might have been magic performed by the suspect some years previously. The witness provided several clues to the audience—for example that Boell was seen leaving through the northern door. This detail is significant because all evil, including magical elf-shots, was imagined in Scandinavian folk belief to arrive from a northern direction. In this context, it is perhaps noteworthy that in church, where men and women were seated separately, women were assigned the northern wing. But the court was looking for further evidence to prove blasphemy and the witness was asked if he had overheard Boell "mumbling something". Boell's reputation was further weakened, and the suspicion of her magical doings hardened, when a female witness, Ellena Andersdotter, reported that her late mother Kierstina Jönsdotter was once on bad terms with the accused Boell Persdotter, who told her mother that she would be struck by a misfortune, whereupon Kierstina indeed fell sick and was so restless that she could not lie still. Ellena Andersdotter suspected that Boell had caused the malady. Kierstina's restlessness continued for nineteen weeks until she died. The quarrel, according to Ellena Andersdotter, had been about some milk. The onset of the suffering of her mother was described as "sudden tooth ache, then spread down in the body, particularly if she had to cast water".[58]

Gossip could result in slander, and sometimes this would trigger accusations of witchcraft. Between 1634 and 1754, only twelve cases of slander connected with witchcraft were forwarded to the Göta Appellate Court, although this number must be treated with caution.[59] Whether they originated through slander or not, witchcraft trials publicly called the honour of a suspect into question.

The Social Construction of Honour at the Courts

The social construction of honour was of great importance in all cases concerning magic which were sent to Göta Appeal Court. Reputation conveyed a person's social position and power within the community; it

[58] Ibid.

[59] Sörlin, *Trolldoms- och vidskepelseprocesserna*, 99–100. Sörlin points out that it is not clear if the appellate court held the same competence over defamation cases as over cases of witchcraft and superstition.

signified one's public self.[60] If bewitchment was suspected, the honour of the accused was the final indicator as to whether a person had indeed caused harm. In some cases, a good reputation led to the acquittal of any accusation of magic. By restoring or slandering the honour of a person, one would also define the honour of the household to which that person belonged.[61] This section considers how court records reported investigations into the honour of the suspected person.[62] In the context of the local court, this social process was conducted by plaintiffs, witnesses, defendants, and jurors.

In Swedish sorcery trials, the reputation of the suspect was always of importance, whether the person was accused of *maleficium* or of unlawful healing. For both men and women, it was assumed that an honourable person neither harmed other households nor acted with intent to offend the authorities by performing forbidden rituals or charms. A dishonourable or evil person was perceived to be more likely to intend harm. For instance, in 1758 in Malmöhus county, Torna hundred, Elin Fränberg was imprisoned by the bailiff at Malmö and then taken to court, accused of blessing, prophecy, and fraud (*signeri, spådom*, and *bedrägeri*). All witnesses were called upon by the bailiff and all testified that Elin had helped to cure animals and children and to find stolen goods. But their sympathy was not on Elin's side, with nobody calling her an honest woman. One witness described how Elin had discovered a magical knot under her doorstep but "now she believes that she [Elin] had put it there herself".[63] Although none of the witnesses could testify to any harm done by Elin and only one testified that Elin had said that she used books of black art and could command "devils that had seven, ten or twelve heads",[64] Elin was sentenced to twelve days' imprisonment on bread and water and an unlimited time in the house of correction in Malmö. This harsh sentence was not only imposed because she used books of black art, but because she already had a bad reputation. She had already previously been to the house

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[60] For a discussion of the self as public reputation and the power of words see also John Demos "Shame and Guilt in Early New England".

[61] And, by implication, the honour of the patriarchal head of the household as Miller has argued for Iceland, in "Dreams, Prophecy and Sorcery," 114.

[62] Christina Larner noted the importance of an investigation of the suspect's reputation in Scottish witchcraft trials. See her *Enemies of God*, 138.

[63] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1758, August 30, Skåne, county of Malmöhus, hundred of Torna, case vs Elin Fränberg (Arens 4:7).

[64] Ibid.

of correction and was caught trying to escape to Denmark with two soldiers. In her case, it is very clear that the court believed that her bad reputation made her a fraud rather than an authentic healer. The following verdict was announced:

> [the accused women] made people believe that they were so-called wise women who had books of black art with which they could prevent witchcraft, heal diseases in people and domestic animals, bring back stolen goods and so on. They were able to persuade the simpleminded to give them money so they would free them and their animals from illness and heal them with blessing, trickery, prophecy, and superstition.[65]

Guilt or innocence was not established simply by reconstructing what had happened, but by debating the social meaning of the deed and the role of the suspect. In the majority of cases, the first hearings related to the episode which brought about the indictment, but later hearings often moved away from this to recall events several years earlier which had not been forgotten. The sole purpose of these stories was to construct the suspect's identity with particular reference to issues concerning honour. In most cases, the suspect was portrayed as a socially disruptive person. By recounting conflicts which arose in the past, the suspect was depicted as a long-term negative force in the community. Such social threat was personified in the image of the scold. Curses were never forgotten; given the right circumstances, such as a witchcraft trial, neighbours recalled them eagerly. These public recollections at the local court turned into powerful weapons to destroy the suspect's social reputation. Ellna Hansdotter from the hundred of Luggude found herself accused of witchcraft and confronted with a hostile portrait of herself by her fellow villagers.[66] The witness Gunella Mattisdotter told the court that she had served together with the accused Ellna on the manor of Boserup, when on the occasion of their having quarreled, the accused Ellna clutched her hands together and said if she only wanted, Evil would rule Gunella before three evenings had passed. The accused Ellna admitted then in front of the court that she remembered that they once had been enemies and that she, in her haste, could have threatened Gunella. But Ellna denied that she would have used such a spell.

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[65] Ibid.

[66] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1728, October, Skåne, county of Malmöhus, hundred of Luggude, squire A.J. Morman vs Ellna Hansdotter (Arens 3:10).

> At this point the inspector interrupted the interrogation and said that the women from Boserup had told [him] that the maid Gunella here present had immediately complained to them about the accused Ellna. He also confessed that he had said to Ellna if she had done any evil she shall pay for it once she comes to Billegarde. Which she later must have realized namely [in that] she lost all her cattle stock.
>
> Meanwhile, the witness Gunella remembered that she had heard from [the accused] Ellna's own mouth in Borgstuga that she had fallen on her knees on Kotappe meadow, rubbed in the earth with her hands and prayed to God that Lars Nilsson from Rodahus shall wither like a herb on the meadow, because he had made her homeless. This was later confirmed by all the remarkable events which happened, so that within five years he faded away like a shadow until he finally died. Ellna Hansdotter admitted that this was the same prayer which she had previously confessed.
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> All witnesses and all present admitted in one voice that she, Ellna Hansdotter, was ill-reputed. She herself admitted that she was knowledgeable and thought that this stemmed from the fact that in her youth she had visited a wise man and learned there some cures for livestock and other creatures. Then the inspector was asked if he could provide more evidence which would bring enlightenment in this case. He answered that such witnesses as had been already heard were many to be found, but that they simply did not dare to confess such. In general, the common heap at this place had such fear of her. But otherwise he had nothing [more to say] than what had already been brought forward.[67]

Public opinion and concern about Ellna was the decisive factor in her trial. It was emphasized that that she had a bad reputation and that the villagers "feared her in a strange way". These issues were two sides of the same coin. It was generally acknowledged that Ellna had extraordinary skills which gave her power over people and cattle, and therefore she was feared. The villagers countered her powers by slandering her reputation. Ellna, on the other hand, strongly defended herself and denied having appeared naked, claiming instead that she had been found at home reading a Swedish hymnbook. Although she admitted to the priest that she knew some superstitious knowledge, mainly for healing and casting spells over cattle, she displayed a deep feeling of guilt. Blaming life circumstances—in her youth, her lameness, then her poverty, and now 'sorrows'—she tried to rescue her reputation. Several times she strongly denied the underlying accusation of worshipping Evil by repeating her right-mindedness and fear of God. When the jury

[67] Ibid.

referred again to her honour, this time not as a good Christian but as a good peasant's wife, asking her why would she still be in bed late in the morning, she was quick to respond.

To save her reputation, Ellna Hansdotter described herself as knowledgeable (*witterlig*) and said that this resulted from having visited a wise man in her youth, "one who was called a wise man (*en som kallade wijse man*)". There was an interesting twist in the sentence of the court, where it was stated that Ellna learned her knowledge in her youth from a so-called wise man (*så kallade wijse man*). In Swedish, the sounds of these words are very similar, but hold a different meaning. In Ellna's phrase of "one who is called wise man" it was emphasized that this healer was widely accepted as a person of knowledge. His identity was shaped by the community through his reputation as a wise man. The phrase of the court, on the other hand, is one of scepticism: "a so-called wise man". The opinion of the community is also crucial in the construction of Ellna's later identity as a person capable of blessing (*signa*) and healing; we are told that she "came to be known as someone who can do such things".[68] And, finally, her reputation again became important to her fate when on the second day of the hearings all the witnesses described her as a person of bad reputation. This underpinned the initial accusation, for which the court could not obtain any more evidence than the vision of the milkmaid. The case would have been easily dismissed if other villagers had not supported the accusations, thereby forcing Ellna to admit certain knowledge and actions. The inspector exaggerated this bad reputation further by stating that Ellna was feared in the parish, implying that she was a dangerous person, and at that point, discussion of her identity concluded. In this way, Ellna became not a healer, a wise person, or more generally an ambivalent figure, but a bad and feared woman. Nobody supported her. In retrospect, rituals she had been asked to perform in order to heal and protect livestock were re-interpreted as malevolent acts.

The reputation of the accused was in many cases the crucial factor in the interpretation of their behaviour in relation to a crime, and was therefore important in determining the severity of sentences and punishment. In most witchcraft trials, the accused was described as having a bad reputation, but in some cases villagers could protect the accused by giving them good references. By manipulating an individual's reputation

[68] Ibid.

in this way, villagers could exercise power and translate interpersonal conflict into an alleged crime.

The Gendering of Honour

Honour in pre-industrial Sweden was defined differently for men and women.[69] From women, honour and social identity were strongly dependent on their sexuality; while this was also an issue for men, of greater concern was bodily control to be exercised in relation to drunkenness. Honourable women were expected to be able to control their bodies and speech. Married women played an important role in the construction of the honour of unmarried women in the village, as Frykman has shown in his study of honour, gender relations, and the interpretation of disease in rural Sweden in the eighteenth century. In witchcraft trials, married women figure prominently among the witnesses called upon by the court to testify about the suspect's reputation.[70] The reputation of a woman was already implied in her marital status; the title of married woman (*hustru*) already indicated an acceptable social and moral standing.[71] On the other hand, to be introduced as a loose woman (*lösa qwinfolcket*) indicated from the beginning a negative reputation. 'Loose' was a reference to marital status because often these women were single mothers. Women who were not subject to the authority of a husband were thought to be more likely to perform malevolent magic. In 1746, Bengta Andersdotter was repeatedly described as a loose woman and urged by the priest to confess to child murder, a journey to the witches' Sabbath, and entering into a contract with the Devil.[72]

Reputation was important for men as well as women, but was constructed around different concepts and metaphors. Historians have

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[69] Malin Lennatsson has discussed the gendered nature of honour in early modern Sweden and people's strategic use of these gendered differences in cases concerning sexuality, marriage, and paternity at church courts see Lennatsson, *I säng och säte*. See also Jonas Frykman, *Horan i bondesamhället*; Carol J. Clover, "Regardless of Sex," esp. 11–14.

[70] I have discussed this question in more detail in "Female Magic and Women's Social Relations in Eighteenth-Century Sweden."

[71] For the importance of the marital status for early modern women and the wider marital economy see Maria Ågren and Amy Louise Erickson, eds., *The marital economy in Scandinavia and Britain, 1400–1900*.

[72] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1746, Skåne, county of Kristianstad, city of Ystad, case vs Bengta Andersdotter (Arens 3:33).

pointed out, for example, that men's honour in early modern Germany was debated in relation to the way in which they conducted themselves when inebriated.[73] Likewise, in Swedish sorcery trials, the honour of men and their ability to control their alcohol intake was in some cases important for the outcome of the trial. The following case illustrates how a reputation for being a drunkard worked against a male plaintiff, and how the accused women were, in the end, acquitted. In the city of Halmstad, the journeyman Anders Brådh accused the widow Ingar Trik, a stocking-knitter, together with her daughter Catharina, the widow of the late Håkan Widerström, of having used witchcraft in their house where he was a lodger.[74] The journeyman alleged that on a Thursday night at half past ten the two women entered his room; he kicked them out but was subsequently unable to find any rest or sleep that night. He explained that when he was in bed the following night, he was again harassed by Catharina and Ingar, and this time he could not keep them out of his room. Anders claimed that Catharina asked her mother whether she had been milking already and that when her mother denied this, Catharina took take a straw from Anders' bed and milked him "so that he was so pulled in his limbs as if the cramp was in him". He also complained that the women blinded his eyes. Anders continued that Catharina asked her mother if she would also like some eggs with the milk. When she answered yes, Catharina pulled up her clothes and her mother picked eggs out of her behind. According to Anders, the women went to the kitchen and mixed all this together, then sat down to eat, whereupon a horrible noise broke out around the house and in the room where Brådh lay.[75] Despite the narrative's careful construction as a witchcraft story—the event was alleged to have taken place on a Thursday, the women caused pain by 'milking' the man, there was a strange noise in the kitchen—the court gave no credence to Anders' accusation because he had a reputation as a heavy drinker and was thus ill-reputed.

In contrast, both women enjoyed a reputation as good neighbours. On 4 October, 1743, the trial continued and Brådh repeated his accusation in response to the court's questioning whether it wasn't all fantasy and imagination. He was also asked when he had last attended the

[73] Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, 65 and 145–67.

[74] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1743, August 2, Hallands county, city of Halmstad, Anders Brådh vs Ingar Trik and Catharina Trik (Arens 3:24).

[75] Ibid.

Holy Communion, to which he answered: "About one year ago". The prosecutor admitted that he could not find out anything more in this case. Brådh then named a locksmith whose cow had died some time ago and indicated that he suspected Ingar Trik to be the cause of this misfortune. It was noted in the trial that Anders Brådh was so drunk that it was evident even to the court. At the next session, on 7 August 1744, the court read out a letter signed by the locksmith and his wife stating that neither would come to the court because they had nothing to do with the matter. Anders, however, insisted on the locksmith's appearance, and on 20 October, 1744, the locksmith Jöns Hallengren and his wife, Anna Swensdotter, testified that when their little son was sick four years previously, Anna went to Ingar Trik to ask for a little worm-powder, which she received. Although it was offered to her, Ingar did not accept any payment, but asked instead for a little bit of milk which she was given the next day. Some days later, the locksmith's cow came home sick from the meadow and died in the crib. Asked by Ingar and Catharina if he thought that anything done by Ingar was the reason for the death of the cow, the locksmith answered "absolutely not". His wife confirmed this, adding that "they have nothing to accuse Ingar and Catharina of, but have always lived together as good neighbours".[76] On 1 December, 1744, the plaintiff and the defendants came a last time to the court and Catharina and Ingar insisted that they were innocent. The magistrate's court decided that journeyman Anders Brådh did not have the slightest proof of his accusations of the practice of supernatural arts by the accused women. The court announced that "since he leads a very disorderly life with gluttony and drunkenness, and also receives his communion only seldom, he loses his citizen right and has to go to prison for a month on water and bread".[77] Neighbourly support and a bad reputation on the part of the plaintiff decided this case in favour of the accused women.

Because honour was a central concept in sorcery trials it is not surprising that the punishment for magic included public shaming. Shaming is a powerful instrument in a society which is built on close interpersonal relationships. Shaming was an important part of the power exchange in popular culture as well as being used by so-called formal and semi-formal institutions of power. For instance, being affected by harmful

[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.

magic such as cursing was expressed as "shame will be inflicted on you" (*skam ska du få*). Shaming was also a means of punishing practitioners of magic, with its social character evident in the public form such penance took. In order to contextualize this system of shaming, we need to understand the role of the Lutheran Church and the importance of an intensified moral indoctrination of the population by the church during the eighteenth century.

The Lutheran Church and the Control of Popular Religion

By the eighteenth century, the Swedish Lutheran Church had numerous ways of controlling popular religion. Through regular catechetical examination of each household, public church penance for repentant sinners, and regular visitation reports to the bishop, the clergy attempted to hold sway over the religious beliefs of lay people. In Protestant countries, secular and ecclesiastical powers were not separated and Lutheran pastors embodied state power. Their position of authority extended beyond the sphere of the church to the assizes, where witchcraft cases were heard. The importance of priests at trials of sorcery should not be underestimated as their involvement extended beyond the initiation of sorcery trials.[78] The clergy was involved in many subtle ways.

Historical studies of eighteenth-century Sweden emphasize the close relationship between the Lutheran Church and the Swedish state.[79] Tore Frängsmyr has argued that the church in eighteenth-century Sweden was conservative and actively discouraged the influence of new theological ideas, such as German Pietism.[80] This censorship extended to all forms of religious practices of lay persons, and formed part of a wider net of informal control of the peasantry. In this context, magic was not an isolated issue, but was instead perceived to be one of the many moral deviations of the peasantry. The moral critique of social customs and norms was especially directed towards drinking, dancing, and music in non-appropriate places and times, marriage customs,

[78] In the period 1735–1754 they initiated 19% of all cases; Sörlin, *Trolldomsprocesserna*, 88. Nineteen of these thirty-five accusations were raised between 1735 and 1754, following the introduction of the new law of 1734; Ibid., 85.

[79] As G. Treasure has noted for Scandinavia in the early modern period, the Lutheran clergy were "ready instruments of royal government" (*The Making of Modern Europe 1648–1780*, 509); see also Tyge Krogh, *Oplysningstiden og det magiske*.

[80] Tore Frängsmyr, "The Enlightenment in Sweden," 165.

missing of Sunday service, insufficient planning for old age, and magic.[81] Magical practices were often punished in the same way as most other moral offences, with public penance in the church.

Church control was well organized and structured and, like the Swedish state, developed to bureaucratic perfection. The Swedish Lutheran Church was in several ways involved in the control of lay spirituality, including magical practices. The Chapter House or consistory held some juridical power over cases concerning contracts with the Devil, episcopal visitations, catechetical examinations, and strict church discipline. In regard to magical practices, local priests and vicars had the most immediate and most profound influence on the population. Not only did they bring many indictments in cases of magical healing and the finding of lost property before the bailiff and local assize court, but in nearly every witchcraft case they testified to the reputation of the suspect, thus having a considerable influence on the outcome of the trial.

The geographical area of the Appellate Court of Göta encompassed the dioceses of Lund, Götheborg, Växjö, and Strängnäs. As a result of the Reformation the power of ecclesiastical justice was reduced as justice became secularized. Thus, the function of the courts of the bishop and dean (*biskopsting* and *prostting*) changed, taking on the character of visitations. The Chapter House (*Consistori*) held the responsibility for the training of teachers, keeping the parochial registers and promoting stricter church discipline.[82] It also maintained its hold over jurisdictional matters relating to some spiritual offences. These were now defined as religious offence or offence against the correct interpretation or the correct religion, or misuse of office by priests or other members of the ecclesiastical profession. Others related to particular offences with regard to engagement and marriage.

The Chapter Houses in each episcopate dealt only in exceptional cases with magic, and after the Reformation, cases relating to magic and witchcraft were generally heard at secular courts.[83] The Chapter

[81] David Gaunt has discussed these attitudes on the basis of Swedish necrologies; "Om frälsebönders sociala problem i Borgeby och Löddeköppinge under 1700-talet". Gaunt analyzes the necrologies of priest Severin Schluter who served in the parishes of Borgeby and Löddeköpinge in the hundred of Torna, county of Malmöhus in Skåne from 1742–1797.

[82] P. G. Lindthardt, *Kirchengeschichte Skandinaviens*, 50.

[83] Ankarloo mentions that for instance to the Växjö Chapter House only seven cases of witchcraft were reported between 1635 and 1653, of these two were delegated to

House in Lund, for example, had to deal not only with cases of a suspected contract with the Devil, but predominantly with alleged cases of blasphemy of which Pietistic priests were accused. Spiritual deviations of various kinds could be found in one and the same prost district. For example, in the hundred of Luggude, in the south-east corner of the province of Skåne, a case concerning magic was reported to the Chapter House in 1726, while in the 1740s the priests Carl von Bergen and Peter Murbeck had to stand trial at the Chapter House for their Pietistic preaching.[84] Here, Pietism and magical practices were equally regarded as deviations from correct Lutheran Christianity. Overall, the episcopate and the ecclesiastical jurisdiction had only a limited influence on trials of magic in the eighteenth century. It seems that ecclesiastical influence operated more at the local level, through control of the moral behaviour of the peasantry. Other forms of ecclesiastical control of magic were visitations and catechetical examinations.

Episcopal visitations were made obligatory by church law in 1687. Before this date, visitations had not been conducted on a regular basis. During the seventeenth century, they were still mostly conducted in person by the bishop, while during the eighteenth century they were increasingly replaced by mailed questionnaires.[85] In this way, Swedish church visitations took on a more administrative character. With the help of published questionnaires compiled by the bishop, which were sent out to the provosts of the diocese, visitations became more efficient and regular. The use of printed questionnaires allowed for an easier overview of the diocese because the provosts were consistent in applying the same questionnaire every year. However, the sending out questionnaires was not invented by bishops. As early as 1666, a royal decree concerning the listing of old customs and buildings requested the assistance of priests in completing a questionnaire.[86]

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the secular courts and the remaining five were resolved there; *Trolldomsprocesserna i Sverige*, 86.

[84] See A. Rydberg, *Peter Murbecks verksamhet i Skåne*.

[85] Ingmar Brohed, *Offentligt förhör och konfirmation in Sverige under 1700-talet*, 189ff. Some of these were published—for instance, the visitation journeys of priest Matthias Steuchius (1644–1730) through the diocese of Lund, which were published as *Biskopsvisitationer i Skåne 1697* and *Biskopsvisitationer i Skåne 1698–1820*.

[86] C. G. Wahrenberg, "Haqvin Spegels visitationsakter år 1687," [questionnaire plus answers]; H. Pleijel, *Abr.Almens Almanackor* [with questionnaire by O. Wallquist in 1787 for the diocese of Växjö]; I. Brohed, *Offentligt förhör*; B. Widen, *Kristendomsundervisning och nomadliv*; Nils-Arvid Bringéus, *Sockenbeskrivningar av Hälsingland 1790–1791*.

Swedish Lutheran visitation questionnaires did not significantly differ from those of contemporary English or French churches.[87] The number of questions being asked in the questionnaire varied, but generally thirty to fifty questions were posed. They were mostly concerned with the condition of the church building, the administration of money, the instruction of the youth, and church discipline. Some questions also referred to popular beliefs. These questions, which were listed separately, had to be answered by the provost himself, while all other questions were answered in consultation with the community.[88]

The procedure with which visitations were conducted must be understood in conjunction with the contemporary ecclesiastical system of justice. Both were applicable to the diocese. It has been argued that the extension and intensification of episcopal visitations show the increase of power of the early modern state.[89] This is especially true for Protestant countries where episcopal visitations were a means of both ecclesiastical and secular control. In the Protestant church, where the sovereign is also the highest representative of the established church, the consistory was an instrument of the sovereign for the purposes of administration and justice. Consequently, the visitations in its diocese served the bishop's interest. With the trend to an absolute monarchy and the increasing development of an administrative network, state power reached the more remote areas in Sweden. This had previously been realized by the tax system, but was now intensified by an extending juridical system. The moral behaviour and values of the peasantry became the main target of church instruction and propaganda. The Lutheran Church predominantly criticized activities such as drinking, music, and dancing in church, sexual behaviour, and 'superstition'. It has been argued that those new models of behaviour reflected a trend

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[87] See for example M. Ransome, *Wiltshire Returns to the Bishop's Visitation Questionnaire. 1783*; M. Venard, "Die französischen Visitationsberichte des 16. bis 18. Jahrhunderts."

[88] 1. Of what disposition are the peasants in this rural deanery?
2. Do you think enlightenment, fear of God and good manners are increasing or decreasing?
3. What are the secrets of the folk? Which superstitions and bad customs are common?
4. Are child murder and other serious crimes more or less compared to twenty years ago?
5. How does the general public celebrate feast days and Sundays?
Cited in Brohed, *Offentligt förhör*, 189, visitation questionnaire 1795.

[89] Zeeden and Lang, eds., *Kirche und Visitation*.

towards inner self-discipline which was characteristic of the rising middle class.[90]

The law of 1726 made an annual report on the Christian knowledge of each parishioner compulsory. These catechetical examinations (*husförhör*) were conducted in every house, and with each member of the household, including servants and children. In this way, the Lutheran Church sought to ensure that lay people understood the Christian teachings correctly and that everybody had the ability to read and write. These catechetical examinations were diligently undertaken and the Chapter House reassured itself by asking in the visitation records about the proper procedure. So, for instance, the bishop's visitation questionnaire for the diocese of Lund in 1795 contained two points relating to the process of annual catechetical examinations:

> Are the instruction of the catechism and the examination purposely carried out in the parish, and how are the matters standing with it; do the catechetical examinations (*husförhör*) happen annually? Are they practised with the elderly, the youth, children, and servants? Are they held by the priest or the parish clerk?
>
> Are there proper records of the examinations? If so, who wrote them? Are they structured in such manner that all the main parts of the Catechism are visible at once and to what extent is it possible to find out what, aside from that which was learnt by heart, is understood of Christendom?[91]

In estimating the cultural significance of catechetical examinations and their value as a form of moral control, Börje Hanssen has concluded in a study of the parishes of Löderup and Borrby that their impact on the reading and writing ability of the youth during the eighteenth century was considerable, albeit women generally had lower literacy rates than men.[92] Catechetical examinations gave the local clergy very exact means to assess and control the religious beliefs of each parishioner.

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[90] Eva Österberg discusses Norbert Elias' thesis of a civilization process in regard to Swedish empirical material on violence and crime in early modern Sweden; "The Civilizing of the Swedish Peasant Society in the Seventeenth Century. A Process with Obstacles," in her *Mentalities and Other Realities*, 113–21.

[91] Brohed provides a good discussion of several visitation questionnaires relating to the diocese of Lund; *Offentligt förhör*, 90–92.

[92] "Of the youth attending the catechetical meetings in the parish of Löderup in 1692, altogether 91 persons or 96 per cent of the women and 84 persons or 55 per cent of the men knew the catechism by heart, whereas 11 per cent of the women and 62 per cent of the men could read and 7 per cent but none of the women could write. This was a beginning. In 1737 in the adjoining parish of Borrby, all the young men and 96 per cent of the young women could read and 31 per cent of the men, but still

Church discipline (*kyrkotukt*) regulated behaviour during the church service but was extended to control the moral behaviour of the parishioners in a wider sense. It presented an extended system of control which was very strict throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Peasants were punished if they missed the church service or communion, or left early to go hunting or fishing. Furthermore, it was forbidden to drink, scold, quarrel, or dance during the service.[93] Regular visitation questionnaires demanded that any breaches of these demands were reported. For example, a questionnaire from the diocese of Lund in 1795 enquired:

> Question 1: Is the church service lawfully held on Sundays, feast days as well as on Ember-days?
> Question 2: Do the parishioners listen diligently and appear in time in God's house and wait silently for the end of the service?
> Question 17: Is church discipline and good order kept in the parish?
> Question 28: Is there an inn close to the church?
> Question 29: Is there anybody in the parish who is especially known for his particularly rude and obvious sins?[94]

One ethnographic detail which demonstrates the church's concern with legal power, impurity, order, and punishment is the sexton's rod and dog scourge.[95] Churchgoers were prevented from falling asleep by the use of a rod, as it was reported, for example, from St Petri Church in Malmö in 1691. In 1756, a visitor to Lund's cathedral observed that the sexton went with a rod, which had a little bell on the top, to wake up those who had fallen asleep during the service.[96] Thus, church discipline was enforced in a variety of ways. Overseen by the Chapter House, it was implemented on the local level by the parish priest and the vicar. Regular reports in visitation questionnaires ensured that the higher clergy were kept informed about the moral behaviour, including magical practices, of the peasants.

As part of formal control exercised by the Swedish state and the Swedish Lutheran Church, public penance in the church (*kyrkoplikt*) was

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none of the women could write. In the year 1757 we are informed that all the young men and women could read"; Hanssen, "The Oikological Approach," 154.

[93] Sörlin, *Trolldoms- och vidskepelseprocesserna*, 82.

[94] Brohed, *Offentligt förhör*, 190.

[95] G. Berg "Hundkarbasen i kyrkan och kyrkvaktarens stav" esp. 103. Berg emphasized that this rod was first of all a symbol of legal power, often also carried in front of wedding processions on the way to church.

[96] Herman Schlyter, "Kyrkstöten, en funktionär i kyrkotuktens tjänst," 38.

part of a wider system of 'reintegrative shaming'.[97] After 1686, this church penalty could be announced by either the church court[98] or by the secular courts such as assize or appellate courts.[99] Public penance in the church was abolished as late as 1855.[100] Public penance was essentially a ritual by which the penitent had to confess his or her misdeeds before the Sunday church service and then sit during the service on a separate bench, the so-called stool of repentance, which meant literally chair of shame (*skampallen*), whore's chair (*horpallen*), or chair of duty (*pliktpallen*).[101] If we consider that the order of seating during the Sunday service reflected the social hierarchy in the parish,[102] being seated separately on the whore's chair, was a considerable punishment. Within the local discourse of honour, public shaming represented a significant loss of power for the defendant. This form of punishment reflected a court that was mainly focused on interpersonal relations and implemented local values of honour and social standing. During the second half of the eighteenth century, when local courts were less concerned with personal conflicts within the local community, the penalty of public shaming lost its importance. It was less frequently inflicted in cases of sorcery, and used only for more serious cases of superstition and contract with the Devil.[103] The ritual of shaming also demonstrates a close collaboration between the Lutheran Church and Swedish state in the early modern period.

The Swedish church historian Hilding Pleijel described early modern Sweden as a society which embodied Luther's version of the three estates: secular rulers, clergy, and heads of the household.[104] This representation of society reserved a powerful place for the priest, legitimizing him like the head of a household, to control, chastise, and punish his subordinates. Swedish local communities were strictly

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[97] Österberg, "Criminality, Social Control, and the Early Modern State," 91.

[98] On public penance in church inflicted by the Chapter House see Ankarloo, *Trolldomsprocesserna i Sverige*, 85–90.

[99] Ankarloo mentions that already in 1641 the Appellate Court of Göta controlled through the Chapter House if the verdicts of public penance inflicted by the appellate court were indeed executed in the local churches. Ibid., 83.

[100] Ibid.

[101] See, for instance, G. Granberg, *Svenska folket genom tiderna*, 79.

[102] Women and men were seated separately; Biskopsvisitationer, part II, 1. Married women went first into the church. See also Frykman, *Horan*, 59.

[103] Sörlin, *Trolldoms- och vidskepelseprocesserna*, 80.

[104] Pleijel, *Från hustavlans tid*.

patriarchal, with the priest regarded as the 'father' and his wife as the 'mother' of the parish.[105]

Eva Österberg has pointed out that Pleijel held a romantic view of a supposedly homogenous village society, and that while the peasants might never have internalized this view, the conservative section of the Lutheran clergy certainly did so.[106] The records of sorcery trials confirm this powerful position of the priest. Each case of magic was either dutifully reported to him, or otherwise the priest came to hear of it from the daily gossip. He often reprimanded the person involved and increasingly reported the case to the bailiff, who indicted it at the local assize court. At the trial, the priest reported on the reputation of the suspect and sometimes of the plaintiff as well, describing whether they were 'good and honest Christians'. And finally, he was often involved in the punishment if the verdict was public penance in the church.

For an understanding of the role the local pastor played in witchcraft trials it is important to consider in more detail the social background of eighteenth-century clergy, and I focus here especially on examples from the province of Skåne. The frequent appearance of priests as initiators of trials or as main witness against the defendant can partly be explained by their social and moral standing in the parish. The social background of the priesthood in Skåne in the period 1650–1800 has been well studied.[107] It has been estimated for the diocese of Lund (approximately 150 parishes and five urban parsons) that until the end of the eighteenth century less then 10% of the priests came from the peasantry or other poorer parts of society.[108] About 50% came from priestly households and approximately 10% were sons of officers and civil bureaucrats. A considerable number came from households of curates, sheriffs, tax-collectors, artisans, and merchants. The bourgeois component within the priesthood was considerably higher in Skåne

[105] Pleijel, "Der Religions- und Kirchengeschichtliche Hintergrund der Schwedischen Volkskunde," 74.

[106] Österberg, "Foljklig mentalitet och statligt makt," esp. 90–92.

[107] S. Carlsson, "Det skånska prästerskapets rekrytering och sociala miljö 1650–1800—några iakttagelser". This study discusses the diocese of Lund, which included the county of Malmöhus, and the rural deaneries of Ingelstad, Järrestad and Albo in the county of Kristianstad. In 1650, at a time when Skåne still belonged to Denmark, 76 out of 165 priests (46%) came from their own diocese. The rest came from all over Denmark. A hundred years later not only had the total number of priests had increased to 245, but also the part of priests originating from Lund diocese had increased to 226 (92%); Ibid., 48.

[108] Carlsson defined social origins by the father's profession.

than in other parts of Sweden. It is also important to note that this section of the clergy did not advance their careers to the extent of priests who came from priestly households. The latter reached higher positions such as dean while the rest remained largely unpromoted.[109] In Skåne, the particular social origins of priests positioned them in a distinct social and cultural role in their parishes. Priests had cultural values which clashed with the moral system of the peasantry.[110] It is therefore not surprising to learn that the clergy was very active in taking people to court for 'superstition', that is magic without direct harming effects, including magical healing.[111]

To further elucidate this uneasy relationship between priests and parishioners, I suggest considering the discussion by Swedish historian David Gaunt who has researched early modern necrologies.[112] These are extended comments of priests on their parishioners which were recorded in church books and which comment on the lifestyle and moral behaviour of the persons concerned. The comments of pastor Severin Schlyter in Skåne testify to a conscious effort to correct the behaviour of his parishioners. Gaunt shows that the relation between the parish priest and his parishioners was not without tensions. As pointed out earlier, the parish priest was under obligation to correct the parishioners' moral life. In the 1770s, for instance, pastor Schlyter wrote that the poverty of the Scanian peasantry was caused by "peasants' stupidity, negligence, their lack of sensible care for themselves and their well-being in future and in old age. This stupidity stems from their unmeasured eating and drinking".[113] Similarly, the priest made his cultural distance felt in regard to other moral and social matters such as remarriage, criticizing what was a necessary economic strategy for peasants, namely the remarriage of a widow or widower. Opposing the marriage of a widow with older

[109] Ibid., 52–57.

[110] The relation between priests and their parishioners seemed to have been particularly in contrast with the nomadic Saami people in the far north. Bill Widen has documented how the Lutheran mission during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had focused on the so-called superstition of the native people; "Stormaktstidens prästerskap och lapparnas mytologi." For a more recent discussion, see Daniel Lindmark, "Pietism and Colonialism."

[111] Sörlin gives the following numbers for the time period 1635–1754: priests initiated in three cases accusations of *maleficium* and three cases of diabolism as compared to thirty-five cases of superstition; *Trolldoms- och vidskepelseprocesserna*, 88.

[112] David Gaunt, "Om frälsebönders sociala problem i Borgeby och Löddeköppinge under 1700-talet."

[113] Ibid., quote on p. 25.

children to a much younger man, he wrote: "That their mother steps into a new marriage causes the children much harm, I have in every way tried to prevent this marriage because their mother is over 50 years old. But she rushes in her misfortune".[114] On another occasion, he wrote on this matter: "Marriage between old widows and young farm-hands I regard almost as sodomy and therefore I always advise against it as much as I can".[115] On the question of alcoholism he was equally harsh. In 1773, he noted in the church register of Borgeby: "Drunkenness of both wife and husband leads to great poverty".[116] The early deaths of children were in his eyes also attributed to the lifestyle of their mothers: "this life was short because their mother was very much taken to gluttony (alcohol)".[117] These comments reflect tensions between the generations (children/parents) in rural households, as Gaunt has shown. But what is of interest here is the cultural position from which this problem is reflected and rationalized on the part of the priest. Already we observe, in the necrologies written by the parish priest, the reflection of a social and moral distance between the clergy and the customs and beliefs of the peasantry.

In most cases heard at the appellate court, the priest seemed to have played his most active part outside the court, appearing later as informer or witness.[118] So, for instance, we learn at the court hearings in the trial of Ellna Hansdotter in 1728 that the local priest, Magister von Bergen, recalled a conversation with Ellna in which she admitted to him her knowledge with regard to healing cows, and quoted a charm with which she used to bless cows that went "Cow and cow's snout, for village and village women, for mountain and mountain women, for troll and troll women". Ellna further admitted that she "would rub salt and malt on the back of the cow" and that she "had learned this from a woman with the name Bengta in Lundom, who is now dead".[119] This conversation between priest and cunning woman had taken place long before the court trial and he had given her a warning. During the trial the priest testified about her honour. At the trial itself, his testimony constituted a dramatic turning point because the investigations of the

[114] Marriage records Löddinge, 25/2/1759, quoted in Gaunt, Ibid., 27.
[115] Village of Borgeby, quoted in Ibid.
[116] Village of Borgeby, 11/12/1773 quoted in Ibid., 28.
[117] Village of Löddinge, 15/11/1782, quoted in Ibid., 29.
[118] See also Sörlin, *Trolldoms- och vidskepelseprocesserna*, 81.
[119] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1728, county of Malmöhus, hundred of Luggude, case vs Ellna Hansdotter.

court were now directed at her overall reputation and honour, and away from the initiating episode.

Priests seldom initiated accusations of *maleficium*.[120] This confirms the hypothesis that priests ascribed no personal conflict to the meaning of sorcery, as is the case in *maleficium*, but saw the issue rather as one of conflicting discourses. Very often, cases brought to the court by priests were healing cases where magical rituals were reinterpreted by the priest as blasphemy and sin. This was, for instance, the case for Karna Lassesdotter who had healed a maid of her stomach pain.[121] Karna was accused of suing superstition to heal others, but denied the use of charms, claiming that she helped sick women simply by baking herbs and smoking food such as garlic. On the first day of the court hearings, the dean's wife, Beata Arenkils, testified that "The accused Karna had helped her in her sickness with smoking and baking".[122] A letter sent in by the local priest was read out in court, condemning Karna's *signeri* as sin. In the manuscripts of the trial we read: "Another witness said that he had heard that the maid Hanna Ohlsdotter [who had been cured by Karna Lassesdotter] had admitted after questioning by the priest that Karna had blessed a band with which she had bound her [a healing ritual]".[123] In this case, the wife of the rural dean had asked this wise woman to heal her, and she was also prepared to testify to this in court, supporting the representation of such healing rituals as natural women's work, without any superstitious overtones. This is even more surprising if we consider that in many cases those who had sought help from cunning people were also punished, mostly with fines. Thus, the priest constructed this case as a discursive conflict, while the dean's wife did not perceive it that way. It is also likely that we see here a profound gender difference: women such as the dean's wife might have been more likely to enlist the help of cunning folk in cases of healing as this was in all households a female responsibility.

A rather drastic example of a priest constructing discursive conflicts at the assize court in relation to folk healers is the following story from

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[120] Sörlin estimated that only three cases of *maleficium* were initiated by priests in the period 1634–1754. *Op. cit.*, 88.

[121] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 21, 1732, Malmöhus county, Frosta hundred, case vs Karna Lassesdotter (Arens 3:13).

[122] Smoking was a common healing and protection ritual. See Tillhagen, *Folklig läkekonst*, 102–40.

[123] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1732, Malmöhus county, Frosta hundred, case vs Karna Lassesdotter (Arens 3:13).

the county of Älvsborg in the hundred of Bållebygd.[124] A case against Kierstin Persdotter, a sixty-three-year-old soldier's widow, was indicted at the court in 1753. The parish priest had tried to trick the old woman, who was known as a healer, into confessing to him her use of healing charms. At the assizes, the witness Jöns Månsson testified:

> that once when he went out to the priest to pay for an outstanding communion of his wife, he had heard how, as he stayed behind on demand of the priest after he had finished his business, the priest said to the widow: "Mother would you tell me and teach me one thing?" whereupon she answered [in disbelief]: "How can that be, I could teach you something". Whereupon the priest answered: "I have taught you so many of God's words, so you could teach me something [in return]". And as Kierstin asked what she shall teach him, he said that he had a sick herd-boy at home who has pain in one of his legs; if she could not pray over it, or, since she is old and not so mobile any more to maybe walk such a long way, if she could teach him how he should pray so that he himself could do it upon his arrival at home. But when she denied that she could drive away something with praying, the priest said to her: "Of course you can do that, you have prayed over Börge Swensson's foot". But when she finally had to admit that she had done this, she insisted that she did not know any evil with this. And on further pressuring by the priest admitted that she prayed over Börge Swensson's foot in the way which is recognized in the court records. Then the witness [Jöns Månsson] continued that the priest asked her from whom she had learned such things? She answered: "I have learnt it in the weather [*i wädret*]". And on further insistent questioning by the priest if she had not learnt it from Satan she answered: "There be God for!"[125]

Initially, the priest got to know about Kierstin's healing abilities through a slip of the tongue by one of her clients, as follows. When the priest visited a former soldier by the name of Börge Ulf, he asked him about the pain in his foot, to which the soldier replied "I hope that I soon will recover since it has really helped that Nätberg's widow has prayed over my foot". Finally, the court persuaded the accused Kierstin to quote the charm she had read over the swollen foot of Börge. This case represents a very different form of priestly involvement. The priest assumed that Satan was behind the healing knowledge of this old woman, and tried to trick her (and Satan). However, neither the Appellate Court nor the Chapter House approved of the priest's behaviour, not because it

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[124] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1753, Älvsborg county, hundred of Bållebygd, bailiff Lars Holmsten vs soldier's widow Kierstin Persdotter (Arens 3:53).
[125] Ibid.

was inappropriate for a priest to lie and trick, but because he would indirectly promote superstition by asking her for help.

In many cases, priests informed the sheriff's officer or the judge of the district about magical practices. In 1772 in Östra Göinge hundred, Kristianstad county, the pasator Magister Cronholm sent a letter to the royal bailiff in which he described how some weeks earlier the peasant Måns Swensson and his wife, Pernilla Månsdotter, from Buddatorp in the parish of Glimåkra came to him and reported how their servant maid, Lusse Knutsdotter, who was also present, admitted voluntarily that on suggestion of her stepmother she was helping, through forbidden arts, to harm her master's cows and other creatures. The priest had taken these statements "in a room in the presence of several others", that is he had called in witnesses. Some days later, pastor Cronholm sent another letter to the court declaring: "I have used all my diligence to bring out the truth about the severe accusation which the maid Lusse Knutsdotter has made against her stepmother Karna Swensdotter, but I was not able to affect anything with it".[126] The same pastor continued to give a very interesting account of his involvement and of his power to establish the honour and reputation of some of the people involved. The maidservant had apparently retracted her confession and was now accusing her mistress, who meanwhile had been widowed, claiming that "Pernilla Månsdotter from Buddatorp, had misled, cursed, and enticed her to say this nonsense about her stepmother".[127] Faced with these contradictions in the girl's statements the priest decided to inquire about the general reputation of Lusse's stepmother. He reported his attempts to the court:

> Meanwhile I want to state that I have tried in many ways to find out the reputation of the accused stepmother and I have found that they are all honest and trustworthy folk. Those who know her said that one never hears anything bad about her.[128]

This work outside of the formal court sphere influenced the court proceedings at the next assize session. Because the girl had originally accused her stepmother, and as the priest wrote, there was much bitterness between them, and the child had "lashed out serious accusations"

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[126] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 4, 1772, Skåne, Kristianstad county, Östra Göinge hundred, Måns Swensson and his wife Pernilla Månsdotter vs their maid Lusse Knutsdotter.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid.

against the woman when examined by the priest before the last court session, Karna Swensdotter had "called upon witnesses to testify at this court session". We can also assume that the priest's concluding remark "It seems also strange that the maid Lusse changed her confession since she left the widow Pernilla's house, bread, and rule" would surely undermine her position at the next court session.

The social power of local priests was considerable during the eighteenth century and influenced witchcraft trials in several important ways. Priests had access to a number of strategies that allowed them to control and chastise lay people. They regularly examined the knowledge of the catechism in each household and reported any blasphemous behaviour, such as magical healing practices, to their superiors, as I discuss in detail in Chapter Four. Priests were in an excellent position to make enquiries about a person's reputation and people often went to the priest to complain about defamations. In several cases, it is apparent that the priests notified the court in writing about such 'rumours', and especially about their examination of parishioners, which often took place in the presence of witnesses. This considerable social power was utilized at the assizes. During the eighteenth century, pastors and bailiffs made up a significant number of plaintiffs in cases of magic. The clergy was also called to testify to the reputation of the defendant, and finally, secular courts inflicted public penance in the church as punishment, which delegated authority back to the village priest.

Conclusion

The Swedish court trials discussed in this chapter did not result from sustained witch hunts. Witch hunts mark the most violent and intense form of persecution, but they are not representative of all trials concerning witchcraft in the early modern period. Witch hunts, which reinforced a demonological interpretation of a witch and her associates, required a full confession from the witch, often extracted under torture. The witch's confession had to contain key elements of demonology such as meetings and pacts, including sexual intercourse, with the Devil. Furthermore, the witch had to name her collaborators, because witches were believed to act in groups. In Sweden, very few of these witch hunts took place, and this book is based on historical records of witch trials which do not fall within this category which has been of most interest to historians.

The consideration of witch trials outside of the genre of witch hunts opens up new and exciting perspectives on cultural beliefs and on social dynamics surrounding early modern witchcraft. In the eighteenth century, the punishments for witchcraft lessened in Sweden. Simultaneously, the scope of narratives heard at the courts widened considerably, reflecting magical beliefs that were not exclusively concerned with *maleficium* or even the Devil. In fact, the Devil appears to have been of little concern in popular magic. Instead, cases initiated at the local assizes reflect a concern by villagers with harm done to their health, and that of their children and animals. The narratives given at eighteenth-century trials further demonstrate how this suffering could be cured by counter magic.

During the eighteenth century, the number of witchcraft trials reported by the local courts to the appeal court of Göta increased dramatically. Especially after the law reform of 1734, which redefined contact with the Devil but no other form of sorcery as a capital crime, more cases were brought to the local courts. Punishments became more lenient and the appellate court confirmed only three death sentences after 1700. In 1779, the death penalty for witchcraft was abolished. This change of legal practice did not affect the number of *maleficium* cases that were brought to the attention of the court by local people, but it did encourage the local clergy and bailiffs to indict in great numbers cases of non-harmful magic, most of them concerned with healing. The number of *maleficium* cases initiated by local people remained unchanged.[129]

The changed nature of witchcraft trials reflected a wider social process whereby church and state controlled a whole range of elements of popular culture. The church was critical of popular activities such as drinking, music, and dancing in church, sexual promiscuity, and 'superstition'. After 1686, church penance, a form of public shaming, could be ordered by both ecclesiastical and secular courts, and this remained a popular form of punishment in witchcraft trials during the eighteenth century.

The local assizes, where the Swedish cases were heard, underwent a significant change of character during the early period. They moved

[129] Likewise the number of cases concerning a pact with the Devil heard before the King's Council from 1680–1789 remained steady. See Soili-Maria Olli, "The Devil's Pact: A Male Strategy," 103.

from being a stage for public conflicts between households to a forum for conflicts between individuals and the state. This different political function of the courts significantly affected the nature and the number of witchcraft trials that were heard at the assizes during the eighteenth century.

Although there was an increase in cases initiated by the clergy, some key characteristics of the trial dynamics remained the same: most importantly, witnesses remained central in testifying to the reputation of the accused. The nature of evidence still focused on the reputation of the accused, that is the social identity and power of a person were at the centre of the proof construction. A community's and pastor's judgment about a person decided their fate at the court.

Secondly, honour was a key criteria in establishing evidence for magic, and it was a deeply gendered concept in early modern Sweden. As in other European countries, early modern concerns about male honour reflected an anxiety about men's drunkenness and the loss of control over self when drunk. A woman's reputation was primarily linked to discourses relating to sexuality and scolding. Calling a woman a whore was, in Sweden, as in other European countries, a grave insult. Unmarried mothers were referred to as whores, and were believed to cause illness in children. This polluting effect of a particular type of woman was also transferred to the female witch. While all witches, male and female, were believed to cause illness in humans and animals, only women were accused of making children sick. Likewise, women's tongues were perceived as causing harm through emotional speech, which was both uncontrolled and strong. Scolding and cursing was constructed as the domain of women, and their evil intent made these words into powerful weapons.

And thirdly, not only was reputation gendered, but magical abilities also reflected a certain degree of gender division. Male witches caused harm predominantly in other men and their animals, especially their horses. The female witch was the inversion of the good mistress of the house: she polluted her neighbours' children, food, and animals as well as causing illness and destruction where she was supposed to nurture and build good relationships. Similarly, benevolent magic reflected gendered demarcations. Women healers were consulted by other women seeking advice for love magic, healing their children, and 'women's complaints'. Wives would also consult them about their husband's ailments. Male healers were more likely to engage in treasure hunts and to give advice for healing horses. In popular culture, these gendered divisions in

magic were not absolute. Similarly, both men and women used words and gestures in rituals of healing and both could be in possession of so-called books of black magic which contained written spells.

Narratives of witchcraft that were formed outside of witch hunts located magical power not in the Devil, but in a person's self. This belief in the magical powers of the self was central to eighteenth-century Swedish witchcraft and will be explored next.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FLUID SELF

Early modern magic was a powerful interpersonal force. It enabled people to get literally under each other's skin, rendering them either ill or healthy, and to change their desires. In Scandinavian belief, this magic was performed by people with a strong self, a self which related in a forceful manner to other humans, animals, and spiritual beings. In this sense, the self was of a profound social nature.[1] It was also fluid to an extent, because in magic the self could change shape and transgress time and space. In this chapter, I argue that this fluid and relational self was the basis of early modern magic,[2] drawing on recent historical research which suggests that the somatic and spiritual spheres were interconnected.[3]

Such interconnections between spiritual and somatic realities clearly challenged the Enlightenment notion of a Cartesian dichotomy between body and soul. The fluid self accommodated older notions of personhood marked by a close relation between humans, animals, and spirits. In magical rituals, people could change into animal form, converse with spirits, and fly to mythical places. This did not mean, however, that practitioners of magic were seen as a kind of pagan relict. On the contrary, early modern popular religion allowed for a fusion of Christian symbols and piety with older Nordic understandings of selfhood.

For the purposes of this discussion, my argument is divided into three distinct areas of analysis: the social character of the self; the relation between self, emotion, and body; and finally, the ability of the self to transcend time and space. I will begin with a discussion of the social

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[1] Aaron Gurevich wrote about medieval Scandinavian notions of the person: "Spirit and matter were not seen as separate entities in that period and neither were the moral state of the hero and his physical qualities. A dichotomy between these would have been alien to the system of values which then held sway"; *The Origins of European Individualism*, 26. Likewise, Roper has argued that in early modern Germany, the spirit and body remained interconnected in popular thought; Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, 192.

[2] Mary Douglas, "The Cloud God and the Shadow Self."

[3] For early modern France, Natalie Zemon Davis has similarly observed the nature of the relational and unbound self; "Boundaries and the Sense of Self in Sixteenth-Century France," 56.

nature of personhood and consider how the relation between self and community was imagined.

Self and Community: Socio-Centric Personhood

The early modern self was closely interlinked with the community and in magic, people were susceptible to the influence of others. In this context, magical power was an important interpersonal force, enabling the individual to assert power in situations which would normally render them powerless. This could explain why, in Swedish witchcraft trials, so many dairy maids, who were at the bottom of the rural social hierarchy, were suspected of employing magic to manipulate social and gender relations. The link between self and society could manifest itself in physical pain, which was generally believed to reflect social tension and to have been inflicted by the malevolent magic of one's enemies. When in 1697 Nils Gummundson, a farm-hand in Småland, suddenly fell ill, he suspected witchcraft to be the cause. As we learn later, in this case it was the servant maid Kerstin who had manipulated Nils' and done him harm because he refused to marry her. In seeking help, Nils approached a wise woman, Cecilia Persdotter, whom he met at his sister's house after hearing that she "could [do] some small arts". He asked her if she had any advice for him, whereupon she replied, "Yes, I shall heal you", and took him out to the fields where she sat on a rock and prayed over him. Cecilia asked him if he had any enemies amongst the men folk, so that she could set the illness on them, but Nils replied "I have no enemies". During the trial, Cecilia admitted to the court that she could "pray away fever and that she had done so for this farm-hand, but nobody should ever say that she had used any witchcraft". The resolution of the court was as follows:

> In regard to the old woman Cecilia Persdotter, so can the court neither see nor find anything else than that she had used blessings [*signer*] and magical healing [*löfterij*] for a long time, whereby simple folk were lead to believe that she was able to do more than others. That is why they travel to her and therefore she was punished as a healer [*signerska*].[4]

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[4] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1699, province of Småland, county of Kalmar, hundred of Sevede. Farm-hand Nils Gummundson vs servant girl Kerstin Persdotter (Arens 2:19).

In this case, the wise woman to whom the sufferer turned for help offered to redirect his pain to someone he would like to harm, asking Nils about his social relations and whether he could point to any tensions. In magic, there was always a social reason for physical suffering and misfortune: broken promises, neglected social obligations, or hurt feelings.

Indeed, emotions acquired a powerful, material significance in the context of witchcraft. Envy, anger, and jealousy were the most common emotions thought to result in magic because these were most disruptive to the local order.[5] These materialized emotions were part of a pre-Christian Nordic concept of self. The Old Norse term for self, *hug*, meant not only self, spirit, and thought, but also mood, desire, or foreboding.[6] It represented the side of self that was able to transcend earthly space and time in dreams and to utter prophecies. It differed in this regard from a Christian understanding of soul (*själ*) and magical narratives referred explicitly to *hug*, not to *själ.* Powerful desires were expressed through magic of the self and conceptualized as 'to put *hug* on somebody', that is to use one's own self to manipulate another person. An envious (*ovund*) person was said to have an *ovundhug.* Moods and intentions were expressed as being in a certain *hug* (frame of mind): anger was synonymous to being in an ill *hug*, while happiness was expressed as being in a good *hug*.[7] Such association of emotion and power reflected the nature of interpersonal conflicts, which were always charged with strong and forbidden emotions.[8] In 1723, a girl accused her own mother of abducting her over the Easter nights of 1721 and 1722 to the Devil's Sabbath, of teaching her how to milk blood, and generally

> not bringing her up as a mother should but beating her and treating her ill, giving her evil advice and teaching her Devil's art, bringing her under

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[5] H. K. Sehmsdorf, "Envy and Fear in Scandinavian Folk Tradition." See also Kvideland and Sehmsdorf, eds., *Scandinavian Folk Belief*, 52–54 and 161–164.

[6] The Scandinavian pre-Christian concept of mind, spirit or soul (*hug*) has been discussed by Dag Dag Strömbäck in "Om Draumkvædet och dess källor"; "The Concept of the Soul in Nordic Tradition"; and *Sejd. Textstudier i nordisk religionshistoria.*

[7] Cleasby, ed., *Icelandic-English Dictionary*, 290.

[8] The connection between envy and witchcraft has been discussed for the Finnish material by M. Nenonen, "'Envious Are All the People, Witches Watch at Every Gate'," and W. I. Miller, "Dreams, Prophecy and Sorcery," 112.

> the influence of the Devil for which her mother will have to answer God at doomsday.[9]

Her mother, Ingeborg, responded to these serious accusations by saying that her daughter had been bribed by the parish constable to make these accusations "which all happened because of envy".[10]

Powerful emotions and their physical powers were furthermore contained in the verb *hugsa* which is semantically derived from *hug*. As this Scandinavian concept of self combines thoughts, feelings, and personal power, so does the verb *hugsa*. In Old Norse it meant 'to think, to observe' and in Norwegian dialects it means 'watch' but also 'wish' and 'to have a desire for'. In the Swedish province of Dalarna, thoughts could be 'big thoughts', 'heavy thoughts', or 'strong thoughts',[11] adjectives which ascribe physical qualities to the inner self. Envy, or the strong desire (*hug*) for somebody's beer or milk, could spoil the brewing process or the milk in the pail.[12] Anger was another dangerous emotion which could result in bewitchment. Particularly angry reactions to a moral offence, such as lying, were likely to be expressed in magic. As a farmer's wife, Kirstin from the parish of Ekefella, admitted she had bewitched the forest guard "because he had lied to me".[13]

Magical acts concerning the self were also expressed by the use of the verb *hugwända* (to bend or to change *hug*).[14] This verb was employed in narratives of sorcery trials to describe magical practices which had very different purposes, in particular love magic or magic whose intent was to win a court case or otherwise influence a person's intentions. This manipulation of the self by another person was not just restricted to emotions and intentions but could also affect the body itself.

One case which illustrates how the self was targeted by the magical practice of *hugwända* is the trial of Karena Persdotter.[15] Karena was asked by Anders Månson to change the mind of Jöns Truedsson. The

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[9] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1723, Västergötland, county of Alvsborg, hundred of Mark, case Borta Joensdotter vs her mother Ingeborg Larsdotter (Arens 3:5).

[10] Ibid.

[11] See also B. G. Alver, "Conceptions of the Living Human Soul in the Norwegian Tradition."

[12] Lund Folklore Archives (LUF), M 11408.

[13] RA, GH, HRT vol. 1, 1716, Småland, county of Jönköpping, hundred of Tveta, case vs farmer's wife Kirstin in Ekefella.

[14] Kvideland and Sehmsdorf, eds., *Scandinavian Folk Belief*, 46–47, list examples of love magic under the heading "*Hug*-bending".

[15] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1728, Skåne, Malmöhus county, Jöns Truedsson vs Karena Persdotter. Anders admitted to the court that after he received the trollknots

semantic expression used in the trial was *hugwända*. Karena was known in the community as somebody with magical abilities and was regarded as possessing a strong *hug*. People with a strong *hug* could influence other people and this is what Anders Månson was asking for. Influencing Jöns against his will could only be done by somebody with a stronger *hug* than Jöns'. Karena agreed to help Anders to change Jöns' *hug* and suggested a suitable ritual to him.

The vulnerability of the self to magic can also be seen in the case of a woman in Ystad who asked a known wise woman for advice about changing her husband's behaviour towards her.[16] In 1707, the wise woman, Hanna Isaacksdotter, had to stand trial for the advice she provided. Some years previously, as she was talking to some other women in the churchyard, the wife of Nills Willumson asked her if she could help because her husband "lives on ill terms with her". Hanna replied that she "will see what she could do" and the wife gave her "fat meat and two schilling" as an advance payment. Hanna went home and three weeks later she sent a girl to deliver a knot containing some soil to the house of Nills Willumson, advising the girl to place this magical knot under Nills' pillow. The girl did what she was asked and "a short while later Nills Willumson lived well with his wife for a while". The assertion that Hanna Isaacksdotter was a wise woman capable of influencing other people was confirmed in the course of this trial by numerous examples of her healing rituals.

So far, I have discussed the general situations of interpersonal conflicts which people attempted to solve through magic. Now I will turn to more specific forms of magic—love magic and magic aimed at winning court trials—which reflect the socio-centric nature of the self in early modern Sweden. The socio-centric nature of the self was well suited to the practice of magic aimed at winning a court case because, as discussed earlier, the local assize court was, during the eighteenth century, still primarily an arena for social or to conflict between the parties involved. In this context any magic, whether intended to strengthen one's own self or to weaken that of the opponent, constituted an exercising of social power. This implies a legal understanding which equates legal truth with personal power. As is demonstrated by cases which employ

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from Karena, Jöns changed his mind (he became *omwänd*) and stayed at home, just as Anders had hoped.

[16] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1706, Skåne, city of Ystad, case vs Johanna Hansdotter (Arens 2:30).

magic to win court trials, the social and magical power of a person was symbolically strengthened because socially powerful people would defeat their rivals in court. Although we find few examples in the manuscripts of the Appeal Court of Göta which describe this practice, it is possible that practitioners of this magic would have tried particularly carefully to avoid publicity because it so obviously undermined the authority of the court. This would support the argument by Österberg that social power, rather than strict legal evidence, decided trial outcomes in early modern Sweden.[17]

The intent to use magic as a way to solve interpersonal conflicts and to ensure personal success in a trial is also observed in the case of Pärnilla Månsdotter, who in 1755, in the province of Blekinge, performed magic to support her husband Gumme Swänsson in the court.[18] The royal bailiff had heard a generally known rumour that Pärnilla Månsdotter had practised "some superstitions" during the time when her husband had to stand trial. To help her husband, Pärnilla resorted to magic. It was pointed out in the manuscript that "The rumour goes that Pärnilla Månsdotter used superstition to make her husband invincible".[19] This idea must have held at least some credibility with local authorities because the bailiff took it seriously and investigated the matter personally by visiting Pärnilla. It was the woman's knowledge of a magical ritual which was considered to have the capacity to manipulate both the self of her husband and that of his opponent. Magical means of influencing the essence of personal power, the *hug*, were employed to manipulate the outcome of the trial. Unfortunately Pärnilla's attempt to strengthen her husband's position in court led to her own trial.

To influence a person's self and power was likewise the goal of love magic,[20] which was not only a way to change relationships to fulfill one's own desires, but more importantly, used as an attempt to restore the

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[17] Österberg, *Mentalities and Other Realities*.

[18] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1755, county of Blekinge, hundred of Braekne, case vs Pärnilla Månsdotter (Arens 3:60).

[19] Ibid.

[20] For discussions of love magic see also Sörlin, *Trolldoms- och vidskepelseprocesserna*, 105. For English examples, see Richard Kieckhefer, "Erotic Magic in Medieval Europe." For an interesting discussion on early modern German witchcraft, including love magic, see E. Labouvie, "Männer im Hexenprozess," 74.

social order.[21] The Swedish cases strongly support this social function of love magic. In most cases, this magic was used to manipulate men's intentions and their selfhood, the very essence of their personality, after the women's expectations of marriage had been disappointed. Young women were anxious to use enchantment as a means of correcting the social behaviour of their male counterparts. These women were not courtesans trying to retain their clients, as described by Ruggiero in Renaissance Italy,[22] but dairy maids who feared for the security of their own social standing if the promised marriage did not take place. If under these circumstances love magic reflected the socio-centric character of the self, we need to ask whether this aspect was equally important to both sexes, or if the social implications of love magic were more gender-specific in the assize courts.

In Scandinavia, both men and women practised love magic, as historical evidence and folklore collections from the medieval to the nineteenth century indicate.[23] In the cases presented in the assize courts, the intention of love magic was to change a servant's mind about marrying a girl by creating a sexual attraction. All accused women admitted that marriage had been the intended outcome of their love magic rituals. One woman had been promised marriage by the victim, who then went on to favour another girl.[24] In another case, the accused woman had fallen pregnant and tried to bewitch the man to marry her.[25] This does not necessarily mean that during the early modern period men did not practise love magic, but rather that such instances were not reported to the court. The difference between actual practice and court indictments in these matters is highlighted by the fact that Swedish

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[21] G. Ruggiero, *Binding Passions*; see esp. 88–129 on love magic. Ruggiero sees love magic as binding passion and fulfilling desire. He points out the role of the Devil in a contract which a young man designed to gain power over women (92). Compare a similar Swedish case—RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1745, Värmland, Näs hundred, case vs farm-hand Swen Kihlstrom who had signed a contract with the Devil with his own blood to gain not only nice clothing and a post in the army, but also luck with "women and common maids". For a discussion of the gendered nature of Devil's pacts in Sweden see Olli, "The Devil's Pact."

[22] Ruggerio, *Binding Passions*.

[23] For folkloric sources, see Kvideland and Sehmsdorf, eds., *Scandinavian Folk Belief*, 46–47. According to Hastrup, the first known case of conviction of witchcraft in Iceland was a priest accused of love magic; "Iceland: Sorcerers and Paganism."

[24] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1699, Småland, Kalmar county, Sevede hundred, farm-hand Nils Gummundson vs dairy maid Kerstin Persdotter (Arens 2:19).

[25] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 4, 1767, Västergötland, county of Skaraborg, hundred of Kåkind, farm-hand Swen Andersson vs Kirstin Gabrielsdotter (Arens 4:30).

folklore of the nineteenth century portrayed men as employing magic to win sexual favours but not marriage.[26] This raises questions about the moral order in local communities and the gender-specific meanings of sexuality and honour.[27]

In early modern Sweden, broken marriage promises were a serious violation of the local social order and justified to the practitioners the application of magic even if this could turn out to harm the receiver or deprive them of their life force (*modstolen*). This magic was sometimes directed at other members of the offender's household. An attempt to change someone's intention was reported in a case in 1762 when Stina Ericsdotter Deboi, a wise woman who was known for blessing magic (*signeri*), suggested that the cause of a child's suffering lay in a young man's disappointment over the rejection of his proposal by the sick boy's sister.[28] This is how the story was narrated to the court by the child's mother:

> Carpenter Samuel Carlsson's wife Stina Abrahamsdotter [said that] in the summer of the previous year, but what time exactly this deponent did not remember, this deponent had a little son who was sick and very swollen. This deponent met the accused on the street and asked her if she knew of a cure for her son. The accused replied that she would come to this deponent, which also happened, either the same day or the following day. And when she came she lifted the sheet under which the boy lay and this deponent lamented to her that the boy would drink so much. The accused answered, "Yes, let him drink as much as he wants". "But," answered this deponent, "can't you see that he is going to die?" "No," answered the accused, "he doesn't die this time, instead they have laid something out for you but which the boy came upon". This deponent then asked "Who could have done this? I don't know anybody who has something against me". "Well," said the accused, "Christian who is with the black-smith, because you did not agree that he shall get your daughter Lisa". And because Lisa happened to be present at this occasion, the accused turned to her saying "and you do badly if you do not want to have him. He came to me to complain about it and to ask me to talk to you about it". Lisa answered "No, what shall I do with a thief? I do not want him".

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[26] Kvideland and Sehmsdorf, eds., *Scandinavian folk belief*, 46–47.

[27] For a very interesting study of women and sexuality in seventeenth-century Sweden, based on church records, see Malin Lennartsson, *I säng och säte. Relationer meller kvinnor och män i 1600-talets Småland*, Lund: Lund University Press 1999, especially Chapter 7.

[28] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1762, Småland, county of Kalmar, city of Västervik, case vs Stina Ericsdotter Deboi (Arens 4:23).

In order to perform a counter ritual to heal the sick child, Stina Ericsdotter demanded "to be given two pots with rye flour", the witness went to fill them up and when she gave them to the accused she asked her what she would like to do with it? "Well," answered Stina Ericsdotter, "from this I shall bake cakes and set them in all four cardinal points".[29] The use of cake in counter-magic seems to have been a widespread ritual.[30] Food in this context is an important sign of magic. The eating of magical cakes could transfer magical powers as the tales about fairy food demonstrate. Eating the food offered by fairies or other supernatural beings could either mean a loss of control over self (e.g., being unable to return to the earth) or being rewarded with magical skills.[31]

This case also demonstrates how magic enacted upon the self seeks to reinforce social roles and moral obligations, and confirms earlier observations which understood the self as essentially a social concept which reflected specific social and moral relationships. Therefore the breach of a marriage agreement would be punished by inflicting harm on a family member. The social cause of illness was also referred to explicitly with the phrase "they have laid this out for you" and the question about specific enemies of the family was very similar to that in the case of Nils Gummundson mentioned earlier. As the examples of love magic show, magic was in popular belief a way of solving interpersonal conflicts within the community, and it affected both self and body.

Self and the Body

As we have seen, the early modern self consisted not just of psychic qualities but also manifested itself in physical ways. A person who was bewitched showed visible signs of suffering on their body: they were in pain, withered away, or became impotent. Magic directed at the self manifested in the loss of a person's life force or physical power (*makt*). If a person was subjected to harmful magic, then their life essence

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[29] Ibid. But this follow-up court session was held on 15 February 1763. The discovery of cakes hung up in a juniper tree in his garden alarmed also Nils Jonsson who reported the incident immediately to the parish priest. The suspected woman, wife of equestrian Olof Bergfeldt, admits having tied magical knots in the tree as counter-magic for her son's illness but disputes the cakes. RA, GHA, HRT vol. 4, 1768, Östergötland, hundred of Dal, Nyby, case vs Lena Håkansdotter (Arens 4:33).

[30] Magic cakes as part of popular counter-magic are also mentioned in Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, 157.

[31] See Kvideland and Sehmsdorf, eds., *Scandinavian Folk Belief*, 230.

was diminished and their body weakened. Evil spells addressed the self directly and the person or animal died as a result. As one farmer described it, in 1716 he "lost his cow because of loss of power (*omaket*)".[32] When bewitched people lost their life force it was synonymous with a loss of control over their self: in paralysis the limbs would not obey. For example, in 1769 a husband reported to the court how his late wife Britta had been struck by such paralysis which had been caused by witchcraft. He described how she had to lie in bed and how she felt weakness and powerlessness (*matthet och macktlöshet*).[33]

In both cases mentioned above, the fatal outcome of magic was bodily harm and impotence, the feeling of *maktstolen* which the victim suffered. In eighteenth-century Sweden, any malevolent manipulation of the self, the 'taking away' of the life force and subsequent ill-health was semantically expressed as *modstolen* (stealing of strength), *maktstolen* (stealing of life force), *or borttagen* (abduction). The image of theft or forceful removal is especially significant because stealing as a crime was, in close-knit societies such as the Swedish villages and towns of the early modern period, a grave offence.[34] The moral crime of bewitching was obviously regarded as equal to stealing.[35]

In some instances, the magical manipulation of a person's self, for example in love magic, resulted unintentionally in bodily harm. This happened to the aforementioned Nils Gummundson, who fell victim to the love magic of Kerstin Persdotter. At the Småland assizes:

> the farm-hand Nils Gummundson reports that two years ago when he served at Gummudh in Wännebörke there was a maid Kerstin Persdotter, who had been deflowered by somebody else. The said Kerstin had

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[32] Ibid.

[33] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 4, 1769, Småland, Kronoberg county, Norrvidige hundred (Arens 4:37).

[34] For a stimulating discussion on interpretations of early modern crime see Österberg, "Criminality, Social Control, and the Early Modern State." Österberg points out that, "(1) Violent crime, especially petty violence, was still a predominant category of crime at the start of the seventeenth century; it is largely explained, however, in terms of a culture of honor and pride. (2) Thefts made up a small proportion of the total volume of crime throughout the period; this is understood as result of a combination of the Swedish social structure, with a predominance of freehold peasants and few towns, and popular value systems," (75). For further discussion on theft see Ibid., 83–84.

[35] The notion of stealing again is also central to the motif of the milk-stealing hare who takes away the life essence of the cow, here symbolized in the body fluid of milk. I will discuss this in more detail in Chapter 3. Milk-stealing was not confined to Scandinavia; for examples of magical theft of cow's milk in early modern Germany see Alison Rowlands, *Witchcraft Narratives in Germany*, 151–53.

> bewitched [*förgjort*] him to become her husband by giving him bewitched food and drink. He was not able to reveal this in public to lament his misery earlier because of the severe pain and frailty which he suffered. He felt very miserable in his head, throat and chest. He was terrible to look at with abscesses and in pain. His flesh fouled and fell from his bones. His manhood and all other strength were taken. He can hardly walk, to say nothing about working as a farm-hand and his secret thing has withered away. He is suffering from much pain, particularly around bed time. His mother reports [to the court] that she cannot but think that his pain came from this woman during this time. Nils Gummundson was asked how and in which way he was poisoned by Kerstin? He answered: Firstly, when he came home one evening from Nothysen, and he was tired and chilled to the bone, he got [from Kerstin] a bottle with brandy and he took a sip from it. But then he became so tired in his body that he had to yawn and stretch, then pain and blisters [appeared] in his face and he felt a terrible pain in the whole of his body. The following morning he took another sip from this bottle and he felt so strange that he poured a jet out of the bottle and saw that it was red. He became immediately suspicious and didn't drink from it anymore but threw it away. Another time, only a little later, Kerstin had given him a sandwich one evening. As he took it and ate one bite from it, he saw that it was mixed with blood and hair. He threw it to the dog who immediately became mad. The third time she gave him a pancake as big as a plate, but when he had taken only one bite from it and saw how it was mixed with blood and hair he threw it to the dog who immediately became mad, stretched himself and did not find any peace. He became finally better after some time but [was] never the same again. Since then the pain became worse and worse for Nils Gummundson.[36]

Following the indictment of Nils Gummundson and the witnesses' reports, the accused Kerstin was questioned by the court:

> Kerstin Persdotter admitted that she took from what goes from her with her monthly time and blended it with brandy, also took hair from her secret thing and [put] it on butter and pancake, all with the intention that she shall get him as a husband. Cried and begged God for mercy, she could have never thought or believed that he would become so ill. She said she was taught this way by Cecilia in Uppsala Knechtetorp, who was called upon, an old loose woman of 70 years, who for a long time [had] found her keeping with good people in the parishes of Rumskulle and Wijh. Kerstin reported how one day, when she was alone with the farm-hand on the farm, he was making hay and she was looking after the cattle, when this woman [Cecilia] came to her in the barn and asked

[36] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1699, Småland, Kalmar's county, Sevede hundred, farm-hand Nils Gummundson vs dairy maid Kerstin Persdotter (Arens 2:19).

> her if this was the farm-hand who should marry Allstrum? She answered yes. Cecilia: "This is a handsome farm-hand, you shall get him". Kerstin replied, "That won't happen". Cecilia: "I shall do so. I have fulfilled many [people's] hopes. She should take blood from her monthly and hair from her secret thing and give him [from this] something, so shall that go well".[37]

Nils' self had been subjected to Kerstin's magic. It becomes apparent in the course of this unfortunate story that to influence the inner self did not only mean influencing a person's intentions and desires, but also their life essence and physical state. Kerstin attempted to manipulate Nils' self so he would marry her, but inflicted upon him bodily suffering and impotence, about which she later showed deep remorse in court. Swedish moral imagination pictured this process of manipulation of the self as the work of a hostile self. The victim was weakened because the life essence was diminished, as signified in a loss of strength and potency. Thus Nils' symptoms of physical suffering signified the malevolent attack of a 'witch's' self. For Nils, loss of self meant loss of life force and physical suffering manifested in skin eruptions, sudden pain, impotence, and inability to work as a farm-hand.

Similarly, in a case of love magic in 1767, a female servant named Kirstin Gabrielsdotter was accused of having used magic in an attempt to persuade a farm-hand, Swen Andersson, to marry her.[38] Kirstin was in a desperate situation because Swen Andersson had made her pregnant but refused to marry her. She saw visiting a wise woman to learn love magic as her only solution. As the witness Nils Frimodig admitted to the court, Kirstin Gabrielsdotter came to his wife, who had spent some time in Finland, at Christmas time and asked if she knew how to "bewitch Swen Andersson so that he would have as much love for Kirstin as he had had previously".[39] She then was advised by the witness' father-in-law that the soldier Jean Dunckman "shall have a kind of grass with which he could achieve so much that Swen Andersson shall fall in love with Kirstin".[40] He gave her some straws of hay and told her that he had got them from the said Dunckman "and if Kirsten gets the opportunity she should put them into the clothing of

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[37] For the use of menstrual blood in love magic, see also Ruggiero, *Binding Passions*, 92.

[38] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 4, 1767, Västergötland, county of Skaraborg, hundred of Kakind, farm-hand Swen Andersson vs Kirstin Gabrielsdotter (Arens 4:30).

[39] Ibid. Note the reference to Finland; Finnish people were widely believed to be skilled in magic.

[40] Ibid.

Swen Andersson so shall Swen Andersson become a changed person (*omwända*)". It was also stated in the court that "Kirstin Gabrielsdotter had been overheard saying that the widow Ingrid from Ershult had told her that it would be useful if she would cut hair from her secret part and give them with brandy to Swen Andersson, but it would be even better if she could use some drops of sweat from her secret part and give it to the farm-hand".[41] She could also use part of the white snake to regain his love.[42] Knowledge about love magic, so it seems, was widespread and both men and women offered their advice about it to Kirstin. The suggested rituals were intended to manipulate (*omwänd*) the self of the victim. As in the previous case, there is a strong bodily component to love magic with fluids such as menstrual blood and sweat considered particularly effective in changing the desire and intentions of another person. The recommendation to use a white snake affirms the observation that in this period mythical beings such as the white snake were linked to magic.[43]

We have seen that the self was able to manipulate other people in magical rituals and that this magic could also include animals, as in the example of Nils Gummundson's dog, or mythical beings such as the white snake. This raises the question as to what relationship existed between the self, animals, and spirits in early modern magic.

Self, Animals, and Spirits

In the early modern world, the socio-centric nature of the human self could be extended to include animals and spirits. Swedish popular

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[41] Ibid.

[42] The mythical white snake plays an important role in Scandinavian folklore. It is related to the German *Lindwurm*, or dragon, often described as the white snake. The magical powers of the white snake are various. Eating it enabled humans to gain magical knowledge and wisdom, for instance to see invisible things like stolen goods. The so-called snake stone was useful in magical healing and protective magic for livestock. However, the white snake was also thought to cause illness and various charms, and rituals existed to counteract it. On the white snake, see Leonhard Fredrik Rääf, *Svenska Skrock and signerier*, 304–09. For the relation between snakes and the sun in Swedish folklore, see Carl-Hermann Tillhagen, *Himlens stjärnor och vädrets makter*, 138–40. For charm against snake bite, see Kvideland and Sehmsdorf, eds., *Scandinavian Folk Belief*, 136–37 and see 189 on the white snake.

[43] A case reporting the use of a white snake for *maleficium* was reported in 1764. RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1764, Småland, county of Kronoberg, hundred of Sunnerbo, Carl Bengtsson vs Nils Johansson and his wife Kierstin Nilsdotter.

culture in the eighteenth century included a wide range of spirits who resided in the forest, the water, or under homesteads, such as trolls, giants, elves, gnomes, wood nymphs, water spirits, and others. Humans had to be careful not to offend these spirits or they would take revenge and send illness or destroy the farmstead. It was believed that trolls would return things to their rightful places if they heard church bells.[44]

Elves, especially, were believed to cause illness.[45] In the case of Stina Ericsdotter Deboi, the court heard a description of a counter-magical ritual directed at elves:

> …when she saw the sick boy, who was very swollen, she thought that his sickness consisted of a kind of elf's blow [*älfweblåst*]. She had heard that against this one shall bake cakes and hang them up in a juniper-tree at all four cardinal points. More she does not know.[46]

In popular Swedish belief, the elf shot, also known as witch shot or Lapp shot, was a metaphor for sudden pain caused by magic.[47]

It was not only elves or mythical animals such as the white snake which were involved in magical practices; ordinary farm animals also had a role to play. Because animals were regarded as part of the socio-centric self, it was possible to bewitch them in the same way as a person. Farm animals could sicken just as humans did as result of a magical attack on their life force. For example, the 'secret milking' of a neighbour's cow was very common. In 1760, a farmer's wife named Sara forced her maid, Elin, to milk their neighbour's cows, which were standing in front of their house.[48] The farmer's wife stood guard in case somebody came down the street. Then she put some flour in the stolen

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[44] For a discussion of eighteenth century notes about peasants' beliefs in Norrland, see Herbert Näslund and Oloph Odenius, "Erik Peter Sehlan: Avhandling om några ännu kvarlevande folklige föreställningar i Norrland knutna särskilt till kyrkliga ceremonier." Sehlan mentions the belief in various spirits (*troll*, *vitra*, *skogsrå*, *sjörå* and *tomtegubbar*).

[45] Ibid., 144.

[46] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1762–1763, Småland, county of Kalmar, city of Västervik case vs Stina Ericsdotter Deboi (Arens 4:23).

[47] In the late eighteenth century, sudden illness was still believed to have been caused by elves and trolls—for example, somebody out of carelessness laying down on the elves' place or pouring water or urine over their dancing places; Näslund and Odenius, "Erik Peter Sehlan," 144. Elf-shot as the cause of sudden pain was also known outside Sweden. See, for example, the discussion of elf-shot in Scotland by Alaric Hall, "Getting Shot of Elves."

[48] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1760, Småland, county of Kalmar, hundred of Norra-More Ingrid Jonsdotter vs Sara Gummesdotter (Arens 4:12).

milk to make little lumps. The next day, she rose very early to wake the maid and had her follow her to the barn and feed the milk lumps to their own cows. She then ordered her not to talk about this to anybody, not even her parents, or she would beat her and treat her badly.

In this case, the farmer's wife intended to strengthen their own cows by transferring the life essence, contained in milk, from the neighbour's cows.[49] In an economy of a limited good, milk production in one household could only be significantly increased if it was taken from others, which explains the secrecy of this ritual.[50] The strengthening or weakening of the cows was imagined analogously to the bewitching of humans: through ritual intervention, selves could be manipulated. As the neighbour's wife, Ingrid Jonsdotter, later testified to the court, she noticed that some time after this milking was said to have taken place, her cow became very weak and sick for three days.[51]

The relationship between the human self and animals was further shown in the ability of witches to change their appearance and to demand animal familiars. In Scandinavia, shape-shifting was associated with magic and closely linked to the semantic concept *hamn* as the physical and moral side of the fluid self. Shape-shifting was a process during which the self assumed a different physical appearance, *hamn*.[52] The assumed new shape could be the likeness of a human or an animal. In order to interpret how magic and shape-shifting functioned in these communities, it is important to note that *hamn* also conveyed the meaning of 'skin' in the anthropological sense of a social role.[53] Shape-shifting or 'going in somebody's skin' was ascribed a predominantly negative moral meaning and linked to harmful magic. The danger and disapproval of leaving one's *hamn* to take on another shape is also

[49] Very similar are cases of magic to ensure butter-luck. For instance, RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1762, Småland, county of Kronoberg, Kinnevald hundred, case vs Catharina Duren (Arens 4:22).

[50] For an application of the theory of the limited good to the Scandinavian context, see Sehmsdorf, "Envy and Fear in Scandinavian Folk Tradition."

[51] Ibid. The matter became known because the priest questioned the two women about this matter in the vestry and he then informed the bailiff, who took the case to court.

[52] The classic study on shape-shifting in Scandinavia remains Strömbäck, *Sejd*. For a discussion of the shape-shifting aspect in *mara*, the Scandinavian concept of the female personification of the nightmare, see C. Raudvere, *Föreställningar om maran i nordisk folktro*, esp. 51–54.

[53] For a discussion of the affiliation between skin and social role see Strathern, "Why is Shame on the Skin?"

expressed in the Icelandic saying that being in a good mood was to be in a good *hamn* and to be in a bad mood was to be without *hamn*.[54] To be angry or 'mad', then, points to the loss of the right *hamn*. Similarly, madness was seen as losing control over *hug*, and going in a bad *hamn*. But there is also a positive meaning to *hamn* and shape-shifting. *Hamramr* was a mythical term for somebody who was able to shift their shape. *Hamingja* meant good fortune, guardian spirit, believed to take on the shape of animals or more often of human beings.[55] A person who was able to change into the shape of an animal was seen as possessing magical powers.[56]

In Scandinavian popular imagination, changing shape or changing *hamn* was an ability held by wise people because shape-shifting enabled a person to gain knowledge from distant places or prophetic insight into the future.[57] In medieval Icelandic sources, this relation between knowledge and power, as Hastrup has shown, was reserved for men.[58] By the eighteenth century, however, Swedish court cases report only women as being able to change shape, despite the fact that outside the courtroom tales of men changing into werewolves continued to be told well into the twentieth century.[59]

How was shape-shifting linked to *hamn* (or *hamr*)? The phenomenon of shape-shifting as it was narrated to local courts in sorcery trials in the eighteenth century needs to be explained, I believe, in relation to the meanings of the categories of people and animals and *hamn* as a social role. As Buchholz suggests, *hamr* did not only mean skin but also

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[54] *Icelandic Dictionary*, 237.

[55] Ibid.

[56] This has led a number of scholars to discuss shape-shifting as a shamanic practice. See, for example, H. R. E. Davidson, "Shape-Changing in the old Norse Sagas"; K. Hastrup, "The Power of Knowledge" in her *Nature and Policy in Iceland 1400–1800*, 197–243; P. Buchholz "Shamanism—the Testimony of Old Icelandic Literary Tradition," for a critical discussion not only of Scandinavian shamanism but also of the definitions of shamanism suggested by Eliade and by Vajda. The relation between shape-shifting and shamanism for European witchcraft has been discussed most prominently in C. Ginzburg, *The Night Battles*. See also M. Eliade, "Some Observations on European Witchcraft." For a discussion of shamanism in Scandinavia (for non-Saami cultures), I refer to Strömbäck, *Sejd*, 160–89; B. Lagerlöf-Genetay, *Den svenska häxprocessernas utbrottskedde 1668–1671*; Carl-Martin Edsman, *A Female Swedish Folk Healer*; and J. Beyer, "Heilige kvinder og maend." More critical about an application of the shamanic model to Scandinavian popular belief is Raudvere, *Föreställningar om maran i nordisk folktro*; see esp. 88–89.

[57] Strömbäck, *Sejd*, 184.

[58] Hastrup, "The Power of Knowledge," 207.

[59] Kvideland and Sehmsdorf, *Scandinavian Folk Belief*, 74–80.

a "cloak to cover which one could put on or throw off",[60] which supports the metaphorical meaning of the skin as a social role which one can take on and off like a cloak. The question then arises as to whether the change into an animal was intentional or not. So far our examples suggest that, at least in the eyes of the accuser, this was done with intent to harm, but other cases support the view that shape-shifting was not necessarily intentional. There are stories about involuntary nightly transformations into the nightmare (*mara*) or werewolves.[61] However, in witchcraft trials these cases of shape-shifting were presented as intentional and the motif of shape-shifting only appeared in the plaintiff's accusations and in the depositions of witnesses who supported them. In their narratives of confession plaintiffs conceded that they had been forced to ride animals during soul journeys, but not that they themselves had transformed into an animal.

In early modern Europe, humans and animals did not present completely different categories of life. On the contrary, as shape-shifting indicates, the borders between person and animal were fluid. Animals had important symbolical value and they were frequently referred to during sorcery trials.[62] Furthermore, the inner self or *hug* was also ascribed to animals and a variety of magical practices such as shape-shifting and the possession of spirit familiars demonstrate this point.[63] Shape-shifting was a phenomenon known also outside Scandinavia, as examples from England, Scotland, and other European countries demonstrate.[64] In sorcery trials, this shape-shifting can be recognized in the metaphor of the familiar, an animal sent out by the witch. In Sweden this was often the milk-stealing hare.

The milk-stealing hare is a mythical animal which represents the envious nature of the sorcerer. The hare steals milk and the cows

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[60] Buchholz, "Shamanism," 15.

[61] Raudvere, *Föreställningar om maran.*

[62] See Russell and Porter, eds., *Animals in Folklore*, in particular the contributions by J. Rockwell "Animals and Witchcraft in Danish Peasant Culture," 86–95 and K. C. Smith "The Role of Animals in Witchcraft and Popular Magic," 96–110. For a discussion of the meaning of animals in medieval Europe, I refer to E. Cohen "Law, Folklore and Animal Lore," 6–37; K. Thomas, *Man and the Animal World.* The notion of animal magnetic power and its interpretation by Mesmerism at the end of the eighteenth century in Sweden is described in Karin Johannisson, *Magnetisörernas tid.*

[63] Per-Uno Ågren, "Maktstulen häst och modstolen ko," 33–68.

[64] K. C. Smith, "The Role of Animals in Witchcraft and Popular Magic." See Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 219 and 256, for divination in sixteenth-century England, particularly the discovery of thieves.

concerned fall ill, with their milk turning into blood or acquiring a foul smell. The withdrawal of body fluids, here milk, is a sign for the loss of soul or of self of the animal; it 'fades away' and finally dies. Although this loss of soul is common in a variety of other metonyms, the hare (or cat) is the only animal spoken of in relation to the loss of milk in cows. The sucking or drawing of milk, which signifies the life essence and self of a person, is associated with breast-feeding and with dairying, the business of women. Indeed, women were portrayed in Swedish folklore as being able to create such a milk hare. It was believed that women created a milk hare or milk cat out of their own blood, and practised witchcraft in this way by changing into animals and harming the neighbours' cows. The milk-stealing hare signified the sorceress herself not only because it was created from her own blood, but also because any harm done to the hare or cat was also done to the sorceress.[65] The two were intimately and organically connected with each other. Moreover, the animal was signified as non-natural by its behaviour and its mythical arrival from the north-west,[66] as well as the impossibility of killing it with other than silver ammunition.[67] In a trial in Skåne the hare was reported not only to suckle milk from the cows, but also to have pulled a fearsome face and smacked the milkmaid. It was impossible for the farm-hands and other folk on the manor estate to catch or to kill the animal. When the sorceress was arrested, the hare did not appear anymore.[68] Here, the shape-shifting into the hare relates clearly to *hamn*.[69]

Another supporting detail for the mythical nature of this hare is the sign of its arrival from the north-west and the motif of the fence. The hare was reported to have jumped over the north-west fence on

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[65] Such a case came to court in 1743 in the city of Halmstad. RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1743, county of Halland, city of Halmstad, case vs Ingar Trik and her daughter Catharina Trik (Arens 3:24).

[66] The direction of the north-west symbolized the direction from which evil came (magical sendings or shots) and to which evil should be sent. It was also the direction in which people were abducted in nightly flights to the witches' Sabbath. See description of flight to Sabbath from Värmland where a girl claimed that she had been abducted at night by a neighbour woman and together they flew "high up through a hole in the house on the north side, and [then] westwards". RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1672, Värmland, hundred of Fryksdal, case vs Elin Biörnsdotter.

[67] The use of silver against evil spirits and the magical hare is discussed in Jan-Inge Wall, *Tjuvmjölkande väsen*, 64. For a folklore example and further references see Kvideland and Sehmsdorf, *Scandinavian Folk Belief*, 178–79.

[68] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1728, Skåne, hundred of Luggude, case vs Ellna Hansdotter.

[69] This observation is confirmed by Wall, *Tjuvmjölkande väsen*, 6.

the meadow and to have left again in the same direction. In this case, the north-west fence was also the place where the likeness of the accused Ellna Hansdotter appeared one morning to the milkmaid. She was said to hold a milk churn in her hand and was therefore linked to the milk stealing hare. Early modern sorcery narratives contain the sign of the witch as being seen "sitting on the church wall" or her spiritual embodiment of a hare as "jumping across the fence".[70] The direction of the north or north-west was in Swedish folklore associated with evil magicians, and according to this image, all ethnic groups believed capable of doing magic lived in the north: Lapps, Fins, and Norwegians.[71] Their sendings (and the hare was such a sending) always came from this direction. Furthermore, such sendings always symbolized negative things: they were either sendings in the form of illness, or visions prophesying misfortune and death and often symbolized as a fly sent from the north.[72]

Shape-shifting indicated not only the fluid border between humans and animals, but also between humans and spirits. A good example is the mythical figure of the wood-nymph (*skogsrå*). In 1737, a farmhand admitted in court that he had a sexual encounter with such a wood-nymph. The boy, who was nineteen years old, was asked by the court: "Where had he first seen the animal which he claimed he had met and had carnal knowledge of?" He answered that he had met the woman in the forest and that she had called him by his name and asked him to follow her, but he was initially reluctant. He was asked how the woman was dressed, and replied that she was dressed in black. The court further wanted to know "If he since then had been in the forest?" Anders admitted that he hadn't met the woman again until two years later when, while having his morning meal, he heard her voice calling "Anders come outside". When he stepped out of the house, he could not see anybody, but he was able to hear her voice. He followed the voice until he came to a hill, where she suddenly stood next to him and asked him to sit next to her. He then admitted that he "had lain

[70] Luggude häradsrätt arkiv, Dombok AIa:19, LLA, 20/6/1726, case vs Boell Persdotter.

[71] This point is widely documented in Swedish Folklore archives. For printed sources, see Tillhagen, *Folklig läkekonst*, 48–51, and his article "Finnen und Lappen als Zauberkundige in der skandinavischen Volksüberlieferung" in *Kontakte*; also Edsman, *A Swedish Female Folk Healer*, 142.

[72] Edsman, *A Swedish Female Folk Healer*.

with her". In response to the court's question as to whether he knew the difference between men and women, he replied that:

> Yes of course would he know.
> Q: If he then became aware [of the fact] that she has breasts?
> A: Yes, I thought that she had breasts like any other maid.
> Q: If he had not read the second commandment where *skogsrå* [wood-nymph], *siörå* [water spirit] and the like are mentioned?
> A: Yes he had read both this and other commandments. He would also be able to give the said explanations here in court.
> Q: What does he mean with *skogsrå* or had he heard any talk about the like?
> A: No, neither before nor afterwards.[73]

Anders describes the wood-nymph in great detail and in accordance with Scandinavian folklore about the wood-nymph. In Skåne, the neighbouring province of Halland, this spirit of the woods is also explicitly female (*skogsfru*).[74] As Stattin states, this wood-nymph was characterized by her seductive beauty but her erotic power would diminish if one was to see her back, which was hollow.[75] This erotic power of the female spirit is referred to in the case of Anders. Not only did he state that her voice made him follow her and that in the forest she asked him to sit next to her, which he took to mean lying on top of her, but when asked by the court what he meant by "laying with her and if he knew what it is?", he answered confidently that, "Yes of course he would know what this is and that he lay on top of her". He later emphasized the active erotic role played by the woman:

> Q: If he, during these days [in which he stayed with her in the forest] had lain more often with her than just on the first day?
> A: Yes, even on the second day he had lain with her and that she wanted him to do this more often, but he was not able to.

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[73] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1737, county of Halland, hundred of Halmstad, case vs Anders Månsson. Although Anders admitted carnal knowledge of the *skogsrå* at the court hearings, a letter by the local priest to the bishop and the consistory of Växjö and a letter from the consistory to Appellate Court of Göta do emphasize his innocence and as the priest pointed out, "that the farm hand had come to him to say that he was innocent. […] That the farmer whom he worked for in Halland had spread this false rumour out of hate and envy."

[74] J. Stattin, "Tro och vetande om skånska väsen."

[75] Ibid., 62.

In this case, shape-shifting is only an implicit feature. The case was presented to the court as an example of blasphemy. However, it is the threat of the ambiguous woman, being human and animal at the same time, which is reinforced in this story.[76]

So far we have seen that magical practices reflected an interconnectedness between humans, animals, and spirits. In particular, the practices of shape-shifting and the possession of witches' familiars demonstrate the essentially fluid character of the early modern self. In Sweden, the hare was the most common animal shape adopted by sorcerers. The alteration of one's physical appearance indicated to contemporaries a change of social identity, and in witchcraft trials accounts of shape-shifting were used to prove the identity of a suspected witch. The notion of moving outside one's skin in order to be outside the normal social realm fits neatly with accusations of magic as being an anti-social and malevolent pratice. In eighteenth-century Sweden, transformation into the shape of an animal constituted the adoption of a persona which was able to transcend the boundaries of the body, time, and space.

Self, Time and Space: Early Modern Meanings of Magical Dreams

In this section I want to explore a further aspect of the fluid self and that is the link between soul journeys and dreams. In Scandinavian popular religion, the self (*hug*) could leave the body and take on a new physical appearance (*hamn*) either in human likeness or in animal shape while the real body lay asleep in bed. These journeys of the self outside the body were later narrated as dreams or visions which carried particular cultural meanings and moral messages.[77] The early modern narratives of visions and dreams had their roots in Scandinavian medieval sagas

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[76] The combination of female shape-shifting and sexuality or fertility is also apparent. In Ginzburg's description of the *bernandante* in Friuli, one woman admitted that women fought in the shape of cats; *The Nightbattles*, 99. Ginzburg argues that the soul journeys experienced as riding on a cock really meant that their spirit assumed the shape of a cock; see 102.

[77] On Scandinavian visions see Strömbäck, "Om Draumkvaedet och dess källor." For a discussion of visions, dreams, and healing magic on the island of Gothland, see the excellent study by Wall, "*Hon var en gång tagen under jorden*." Catholic and Lutheran apparitions in Scandinavia and Germany are discussed by Jürgen Beyer, "On the Transformation of Apparition Stories in Scandinavia and Germany." For comparative European material, see J. Le Goff, "The Dreams of Helmbrecht the Elder," in Le Goff, *Medieval Imagination*, 232–42; Peter Dinzelbacher, *Vision und Visionliteratur im Mittelalter*; Daniel Pick and Lyndal Roper, eds., *Dreams and History*.

in which both men and women had prophetic dreams.[78] The lifeless sleep of the dreamer was reported by onlookers to last only several minutes, but the dreamer experienced journeys of lengthy duration, sometimes several years, and the transcendence of earthly space mirrored the transcendence of normal time.

If dreams and visions are interpreted as integral parts of particular cultures then they need, as Price has pointed out, to be seen in relation to the notion of personhood in this particular society.[79] Previous research into the cultural significance of dreams has highlighted two main aspects which I have found to be important for an understanding of early modern Swedish visions and dreams: first, "dreams were interpreted as counsels for action"[80] and had social significance; and second, if the narration of dreams was a social act, then the social role of the dreamer was of importance.[81] Thus, dreams became part of community discourse, and at the same time also revealed the relationship between self and fate.[82] Thus a person was perceived to be a social as well as a spiritual being.

Although dreams and visions were spiritual experiences, they also served as a cultural means of social control. This is of particular importance in sorcery trials. Studies of prophetic dreams in medieval Iceland have demonstrated that dreams were a socially accepted means of expressing suspicions about the practice of sorcery because they were sufficiently ambiguous to imply, but not openly accuse, the offender.[83] In eighteenth-century Sweden, prophetic dreams were still used to imply suspicions of witchcraft and, as in medieval Iceland, they could influence public opinion and thus exercise social control.[84] The observation that in Swedish sorcery trials, dreams functioned as a form of social memory corresponds also with recent anthropological findings.[85]

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[78] J. Jochens, "Old Norse Magic and Gender." Jochens argues that although both men and women experienced visions, women had a greater reputation for being skilled in prophecy.

[79] Price, "The Future of Dreams," 14.

[80] Hastrup, *Nature and Policy in Iceland 1400–1800*, 208.

[81] I. Edgar, "Dream Imagery Becomes Social Experience," 100; Price, "The Future of Dreams," 15.

[82] Compare W. I. Miller, "Dreams, Prophecy and Sorcery," 115 and Hastrup, *Nature and Policy*, 208.

[83] Miller, "Dreams, Prophecy and Sorcery," 104.

[84] Ibid., 106.

[85] A. Rumsey, "The Dreaming, Human Agency and Inscriptive Practice."

Furthermore, early modern dreams involved a transcendence of time not to the past as in Freud's interpretation of dreams, but to the future.[86] This enabled the dreamer to predict future events and to make prophecies. Historical studies have shown that lay people continued to practise prophecy throughout Lutheran Scandinavia in the early modern period.[87] In popular imagination, as well as in the lower courts, prophecy and sorcery were seen to be closely related.[88] Dreams and visions maintained their prophetic nature in the eighteenth century.[89] For instance in 1722, Börta Andersdotter explained how she could predict in one case that a patient was going to die:

> Q: How could she know that his sickness was deadly?
> A: As she spoke over the sick one the aforementioned prayer: Jesus Christ himself sat etc., she stumbled over the name of the Holy Trinity and this is always a sure [sign] that the sick person will die and not come alive again.
> Q: How and where did she stumble?
> A: As she wanted to say the prayer 10 times in a row, she could never mention the last word of the prayer, in the name of God, the Father's Son, the Holy Ghost, as much as she wanted to. Instead it was as if it was kept in her throat, so that no word came out, and if this happens that is always a sure sign of death.[90]

One outcome of journeying to the realm of the spirits could be that one became a healer. Gotland's famous healer named Hejnumkärringen, or Gertrud Ahlgren, admitted to the consistory court in Visby on October 14, 1737 that at the age of ten she had been to the "little ones under the earth". It was there that she had learned how to cure the sick. She had remained there for three days, during which time her body was witnessed lying at home in bed, appearing to be dead.[91]

In the case of Gertrud Ahlgren, the self was abducted to the goblin's place under the earth, and the girl was given the gift of magical

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[86] This important difference to Freud has been outlined by Price, "The Future of Dreams."

[87] For a discussion of popular prophets in Lutheran countries see Beyer, "Lutheran Popular Prophets in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries." Beyer's interest is the interaction between oral and written traditions in these prophecies.

[88] The close link between sorcery and prophecy in medieval sagas has been discussed by Jochens, "Old Norse Magic and Gender."

[89] On Scandinavian visions see Strömbäck "Om Draumkvaedet och dess källor."

[90] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1722, county of Älvsborg, hundred of Ale, case vs Börta Andersdotter (Arens 3:4).

[91] See Bengt af Klintberg, *Hejnumkärringen*, 33.

healing. In other cases the self would be taken by suspected witches to Hell or to the witches' Sabbath which in Sweden took place on the mountain *blåkulla*.[92] In the dream, the abductee always returned from their journey back home to their bed, and upon waking felt physically exhausted, sick, and feverish, which were interpreted as signs that magic had taken place.[93]

The ability of the self to separate from the body is conveyed in the metaphor of the riding spirit (*hugr*), which is related to spirit or self (*hug*) and the verb to ride (*rida*) and was used to describe malevolent soul journeys. Furthermore, the image of the riding spirit carried strong gendered meanings. 'Troll-rider' was the only term attributed to both men and women,[94] with the majority of semantic expressions, such as night-rider, fence-rider or *mara*, applied only to women and regarded as insults.[95] The Scandinavian material confirms the European tradition in which the metaphor of riding was understood to carry strong sexual connotations.[96] The female night-rider in Old Norse, Old Icelandic, and Old English is a shape shifter herself or rides on animals. Anyone encountering her would fall ill or die. Again, the gendered sexual connotations were clearly drawn in early medieval law, for example in *Lex Salica*, where female witches were equated with whores.[97] The implicit reference to inappropriate sexual behaviour was strengthened by the metaphor of loose hair and the image of the fence, both of which indicated moral and social transgressions. The rider of the fence was a socially ambivalent figure because the fence was a symbolic division between the inside and the outside, between order and chaos.[98]

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[92] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1672, Värmland, Fryksdal hundred, confession of Elin Biörnsdotter of having been flying with other women "to a mountain". See also RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, Småland, county of Kalmar, city of Vimmerby, confession of a witch girl (*trållflicka*) of flying with the witches to Hell four times a year.

[93] Strömbäck, *Sejd*, 154.

[94] Strömbäck, *Sejd*, 181.

[95] Strömbäck, "The Concept of the Soul in Nordic Tradition," 13, lists *kveldrida*, *mara*, *myrkridur*, as well as *tunridur*. In sorcery trials it was an insult and an implicit accusation of witchcraft to state that one had seen a woman riding naked on the fence in troll shape and with loose hair. For instance, RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1726, Skåne, hundred of Luggude, case vs Ellna Hansdotter; RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1728, Skåne, hundred of Luggude, case vs Boell Persdotter.

[96] Charles Zika, "Fears of Flying," 19–48.

[97] See the discussion on female night-riders in Katherine Morris, *Sorceress or Witch?*, 150–53.

[98] Aaron Gurevich, "Semantics of the Medieval Community," in his *Historical Anthropology of the Middle Ages*, 200–09. See also Hastrup, "Cosmology and Society in Medieval Iceland."

There were good and bad journeys and these were shaped by specific narrative devices. A person could experience a soul journey as an abducted victim who was forced to leave the body and to follow the caller. Bad journeys were journeys to Satan's place, often explicitly named as flights to *blåkulla*.[99] These soul journeys were narrated to the court, in indirect accusations of witchcraft, because the accused abductor left the dreamer ill and in pain (*maktstolen*) afterwards. The material of the Appeal Court of Göta contains several accounts of soul journeys. These diabolical narratives of forced abductions, such as those to the witches' meeting at *blåkulla*, emerge mainly from the second part of the seventeenth century from the hundred of Fryksdal. Fryksdal is situated in the province of Värmland, the only province within the jurisdictional area of the Appeal Court of Göta which was affected by the witch hunt during the years 1668–1676. On the other hand, good journeys were reported as dreams in which the dreamer followed a divine call, when, for instance a guardian angel appeared and the self underwent a rite of passage (ritualized in the form of having to overcome an illness and being called three times), assuming a new spiritual and social identity in becoming a healer.[100] Reports from the island of Gothland from as late as 1738 describe the soul journey as the purely positive initiation of a healer.[101] In any case, physical suffering in the form of illness signified this spiritual transformation of the self.

Importantly, narratives of the self transcending time and space formed part of healing rituals. Magical healing will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four, with a focus here on those aspects relating to the self, time, and space. Healing charms re-enacted a meeting between the patient and the healer, who often appeared as Jesus and Mary. Time and space were depicted as being outside the natural order so as to emphasize that the healing rituals contained narratives

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[99] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1746, Skåne, county of Kristianstad, hundred of Järrestad, case vs Bengta Andersdotter (Arens 3:31–34, later heard at city of Ystad); RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, Västergötland, county of Älvsborg, hundred of Mark, 1723, Borta Joensdotter vs her mother Ingeborg Larsdotter (Arens 3:5); RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1676, Ingredh Joensdotter (Arens 2:4); RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1672, Värmland, Fryksdal hundred, case vs Elin Biörnsdotter (Arens 2:2), Justitierevision, Besvärs- och Ansökningsmål, 1724, Värmland, hundred of Näs (Arens 6:9).

[100] As late as 1838, a case from Skåne was reported, where Anna Joensdotter experienced three times the call of an angel during her sleep. The angel told Anna that she was chosen to be a healer. LUF, manuscript Pape (Anna Joensdotter).

[101] Wall, "Hon var en gång tagen under jorden," 187–99. The island was under the jurisdiction of the Appellate Court of Svea.

of soul journeys, in which the sick person met a mythical healer such as Mary, Jesus, or St Olof. In 1722, the bailiff accused an old woman, Börta Andersdotter, of using "prophecy, blessings and various healing" for curing people as well as livestock.[102] Börta defended herself, "saying she knew nothing evil with it, but only helped people who came to her to seek advice". She admitted several blessings. To cure people and livestock against *Finnshot* she would use the following charm:

> Jesus Christ himself sat down, there came the Virgin Mary, Jesus' well blessed mother. Christ my well blessed son, why are you so screaming? It comes of no surprise that I shall scream. Sit down you well blessed son. I shall heal you with 10 fingers and God's 12 angels. In the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. When this is finished one shall take all five fingers and twist around the hole which can be seen, sometimes smaller sometimes bigger, under the skin which is unbroken. And it heals soon.[103]

This spell and ritual re-enacts a healing scene where the healer identifies with Mary and the ill person with the suffering Jesus. Sometimes it is Christ who advises his mother about the appropriate healing ritual, as in the following charm and ritual against animal diseases:

> The Virgin Mary asked Jesus Christ, her well blessed son, for advice. Such a hard sickness came to our land. Jesus Christ himself answered his well blessed mother: take malt and salt and give it against the hard illness, against mite and inflammation. In the name of God Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Here she notes that as malt and salt are mentioned, one makes a cross over the malt and the salt which she has in a bowl or on a plate. Then one says, be healed now [by] God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.[104]

Such healing rituals were counter-magical devices against harmful "sendings" or "shots". Sendings were also called Lapp shots, elf shots, witch shots, or Finn shots as in the case mentioned above.[105] The metaphor of the shot signifies the most important qualities of these sendings: directed, physical, fast, invisible, deliberate, and powerful. Sendings enabled the self to exercise power over other selves, affecting

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[102] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1722, county of Älvsborg, hundred of Ale, case vs Börta Andersdotter (Arens 3:4).

[103] Ibid.

[104] Ibid.

[105] On the popular discourse of Finnish people as particularly skilled in magic see Tillhagen, "Finnen und Lappen als Zauberkundige in der skandinavischen Volksüberlieferung."

their vital life force. As I have mentioned before, the diminishing of the victim's self was expressed in Sweden through specific verbs. In religious discourse, the intrusion of a self could also be read as possession by the Devil, but most court cases were unambiguous that the sending originated from a hostile neighbour. These descriptions of the sending show that the self, if operating outside of social controls, could cause harm. It also demonstrates that no one person exercised full control over his or her own self.

Conclusion

As the records of the Appellate Court of Göta show, the self was active in the world through magic. Magic as directed at, and performed by, the self was not only evident in ecstatic experiences and dreams, although we have some evidence of this, but also in more mundane forms such as love magic, winning court cases, and influencing others or inflicting disease.[106] Early modern Swedish popular beliefs placed the self firmly at the centre of magic and regarded the self as interconnected with the community, both living and dead. Metaphors of the self used in magical practices, such as a likeness of the practitioner or the milk-stealing hare, were indirect but very powerful statements about moral and social relations. This self, which was so central to magic, had very distinct features which differ from our modern Western understanding of personhood. In eighteenth-century Swedish popular culture, understandings of the self were not the same as contemporary conceptualizations, which equate the inner self with the mind or soul. Firstly, the self was not understood as a dichotomy of body and soul, but on the contrary the spiritual and the physical were interconnected. Secondly, the self was totally socio-centric. It could manipulate others, as outlined above, and this influence was also extended to animals, where sickness or the loss of milk could be interpreted as the workings of malevolent magic.

In magical practice, the socio-centric self could be manipulated by people and was capable of influencing others. This manipulation was seen as the work of the self (*hug*) which was comprised of thoughts and

[106] This wide spectrum of magical abilities is evident in a case of 1770, Småland, county of Kalmar, hundred of Södra Möre, where the widow Anna Andersdotter was accused by the royal bailiff of administering blessings (*signeri*) and witchcraft (*trulldom*) to harm other people's creatures. RA, GHA, HRT vol. 4, 1770, Province of Småland, county of Kalmar, hundred of Södra More, case vs Anna Andersdotter.

feelings, and both malevolent and benevolent magical practices were semantically expressed in verbs relating explicitly to this self, such as *hugsa*, and *hugwända*, meaning literally to bend, and in this context, to change, the self. The self exercised power over others because it could leave the body and invade those of other humans or animals. People were perceived to be able to leave their bodies during soul journeys, and to intrude into other people's bodies in the form of so-called 'sendings'. In Sweden, these separate components which formed the self were *hamn* and *hug*. The self was permeable and could expand beyond its bodily borders. The self was also contained in body fluids and these could therefore exercise magical power.

I have argued that the Swedish indigenous concept of self *hug* was central to popular magical practice in eighteenth-century Sweden. This model of self presented an interconnected spiritual and physical entity (*hug* and *hamn*). Indeed, the material and immaterial aspects of person were not distinguished clearly. The self was not constituted by language only but, because of its physical qualities, also experienced somatically. Magic enacted by the self became visible in the bodies of humans and animals, as it affected their life essence. Furthermore, the semantically related verbs of *modstolen* and *maktstolen* described magical acts which deprived a human or animal of their inner self and life strength (*mod*, *makt*). Equally, thoughts and emotions were powerful and could be transformed into magic enacted upon other selves.

All magical practice, whether malevolent or benign, was based on the social character of the self, and this social self extended also to animals. Healing, love magic, inflicting harm, or the general attempt to manipulate others was often performed by people believed to possess a powerful self. In Sweden, this concept of the magic of the self was represented semantically by verbs relating to *hug*, such as *hugwända*. Magic was practised to a variety of ends, among them love magic and magic to manipulate the outcome of court trials. Because the self also represented the life force, ability to work, and sexual potency, the magical diminution of the self in malevolent cases was known as *modstolen* or *maktstolen*.

The second important characteristic of the self in magic was its fluidity, which played a role in dreams and soul journeys, both genres employed in sorcery narratives. Dreams held social significance because they were understood not as an expression of the unconscious or of the past, but as a 'guide for counsel' and a prediction for the future. In magic, the past, present, and future could collapse into one, with

the fluid self moving between them. Dreams were narrative devices to communicate the experience of the self transcending body, time, and space. The transcendence of the physical body was equated with moving outside social control and being outside the social realm. It was this sphere of the macrocosm where, in popular imagination, a person could gain magical knowledge in order to heal, and to predict future events, or in order to harm others.[107]

It has become clear that the self in early modern Swedish magic was not simply a psychic entity. The corporeal qualities of self were equally important and it was, after all, the body which displayed signs of magic. The body made the invisible magic of the self, such as sendings, visible. Moreover, somatic states such as sickness and possession could be counteracted by magic. The workings of both malevolent and benign magic were displayed upon the body. Healing magic, a form of magic which is prominently displayed in court records, operated from the idea of the body as connecting the individual with the community. It was in somatic states such as pain and illness that the self displayed its relations to others. If, as I have shown, the self was socially interpreted at the local courts, we now need to ask if the same was true for the body.

[107] Hastrup, "The Power of Knowledge," 210 and 241.

CHAPTER THREE

MAGIC AND THE BODY

In this chapter I argue that early modern magic expressed the interconnectedness of the body physical and the body social. This embodiment assigned cultural meanings to somatic states; for example illness could be caused by witchcraft and cured by healing magic. Magic, in both its malevolent and benign forms, worked upon the body. At the same time, magic also worked through the body, as body fluids and body parts played a central role in magical rituals. In this sense, the early modern body and magic were both positioned within the total network of social relations.

Magical discourse and practice reflected the permeability of the body's borders and the social regulation of exchanges between bodies. Conflicts between neighbours were made visible by misfortune which befell the bodies of people and animals in the households concerned. To actively use magic to inflict pain on a victim by magically manipulating some of their hair was as possible as preventing one's enemies from winning court cases by putting a spell on their livers and tongues. The social could be experienced in a somatic way, with people feeling a spell in their limbs as pain travelled through their bodies.

The scope of these social relations was exceedingly broad. In early modern Europe, magic was rendered visible on the bodies of women, men, children, and animals. Female and male bodies alike were affected by magic, and many court records deal with children's illnesses which were attributed to witchcraft.[1] In stories about witchcraft, there was no absolute separation between human and animal bodies either, and a number of people were accused of shape-shifting and assuming the body of a cat or a hare. Animal bodily fluids—for example cow's milk or dog's blood, or hair clippings from those animals—were employed in magical rituals and believed to harm or heal the bodies of humans or other animals. The question arises as to whether this link between

[1] Witchcraft as a common explanation for children's sickness in early modern England is discussed in Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England 1550–1720*, 241.

humans and animals had gender-specific aspects. For example, were men and women equally able to manipulate the bodies of animals and was the appearance of the 'second body' of the witch, the so called 'familiar' in animal form, an exclusively female phenomenon? Furthermore, the existence of witches' familiars, well known also in English witchcraft, begs the question of how they related not only to the body of the witch and her household but also to other bodies in the community.

Magic affected both male and female bodies, and was committed by men and women alike during the early modern period. Yet witchcraft records reveal in great detail how some forms of body magic, such as the wide-spread milk magic, were attributed only to women. We therefore need to ask how women and men differed in their uses of body magic, including the use of body fluids and body parts. Were male magic and female magic mutually exclusive? Finally, we need to explore whether perceptions of these magical exchanges between bodies were transformed under the influence of the Enlightenment and the body borders redrawn during the eighteenth-century.

The extend to which the body was embedded in social relations can be considered via an examination of the use of bodily fluids in magic. Physical productions such as blood, milk, and urine represented the material means by which the social transactions between body and society were encoded in magical rituals. Apart from the more commonly known use of blood or milk in magic, the latter of which will be specifically discussed below, a whole range of other fluids—for example, urine, saliva, and sweat—were employed in harmful and benevolent magic. Since fluids were seen as magically potent, it is worth exploring in some detail the views contemporary Europeans held about the powers of body fluids. How did they imagine body fluids working certain forms of magic? Were there any significant differences in the way female and male body fluids worked this magic? And finally, what conclusions does the widespread use of body fluids in magic allow us to draw about the relationship between bodies and societies?

Blood was one of the body fluids widely accepted as carrying magical properties in Sweden during the eighteenth century. Not only do we find its magical application reported in trials of magic and witchcraft, but also in the medical discourse of the time. For example, Carl Linneaus, who was trained in medicine, discussed extensively the magical properties of blood, as well as of other body fluids such as saliva and

urine.[2] Although blood was used by both men and women in magic, as we shall see in this chapter, Linneaus reports exclusively on women's magical use of blood. Drawing on a number of examples of magical practices reported to him during the first half of the eighteenth century, Linneaus focused particularly on women's use of menstrual blood in love magic and in healing magic.[3] The use of menstrual blood in love magic is also documented in the records of the Swedish witchcraft trials, as discussed in the previous chapter.[4]

Court records show that blood as the magical means of transaction between body and society was used by women in magical healing also. Blood was regarded as effective in the treatment of epilepsy, a condition that was perceived to be caused by witchcraft.[5] The magical exchange was not restricted to human bodies; sometimes animal blood was used to heal epilepsy, as became apparent in 1732 when Karna Lassesdotter, who was a well-known healer in the court district of Frosta, in Skåne, had to stand trial on accusation of benediction.[6] She was accused by one witness of using dog blood, apparently to cure the witness' son of epilepsy.

Men also attempted to fulfill their desires with the help of blood magic. The Swedish court records describe men using their blood to sign a contract with the Devil, handing over body and soul. In 1745, Swen Kihlström was accused of having written a contract with Satan in his own blood. He had asked Satan to give him in return:

> real silver pennies, nice gentleman's cloth, to get him nice fashionable ladies and to guarantee him favor with women and common maids, to get him service in the army and luck in drinking, in jousting (*tornerande*) and shooting.[7]

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[2] Wikman provides a detailed discussion of Carl Linneaus' views on the magical properties of body fluids in his *Lachesis and Nemesis. Four Chapters on the Human Condition in the Writings of Carl Linnæus*.

[3] Ibid., 50.

[4] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1699, Småland, Kalmar's county, Sevede hundred, farmhand Nils Gummundson vs dairy maid Kerstin Persdotter (Arens 2:19).

[5] Tillhagen, *Vår kropp i folktron*, 279. For the use of blood in a healing ritual against toothache see RA, GHA, HRT vol. 4, 1768, Västergötland, county of Skaraborg, case vs Stina Linneqwist (Arens 4:32).

[6] The Swedish original is *signa*.

[7] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1745, Värmland, Näs hundred, case vs Swen Kihlstöm. (Arens 3:26).

The folklore collections of Scandinavia from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries confirm the eighteenth-century case. A folktale from Norway describes how a girl tried to gain the desire of a particular man by placing three drops of blood in an apple to give him to eat.[8]

Another important body fluid used in magical acts across Europe was urine. Like milk, which will be discussed later, urine was thought to be capable of influencing other people's bodies, acting as a magical agent to transfer pain, and of modifying their intentions, as, for example, in love magic. Urine was also acknowledged to possess healing power. If we return to our case studies from the court district of Luggude, we find one case alleging that a wise woman, Karena, had been asked by a villager to influence his farm-hand's mind so that he would stay longer at the farm. She advised him to bury a *lerflaska*, a bottle "in which she had cast some water" under the threshold. The meaning of the ritual is easily deciphered. Karena's urine was believed to be powerful enough to change the mind of Joens, the farm-hand, as he stepped over the threshold.[9] Indeed, in eighteenth-century Sweden, there was no clear classificatory distinction drawn between Karena's body fluid, the urine, and Joens' intentions, which were both perceived as constituting part of one's self and being open to magical manipulation. This stands in sharp contrast to our modern understanding which would classify her urine as purely a bodily product and his intentions as belonging to the realm of the mind. In the early modern Swedish world, the division between body fluids and thoughts was permeable, not only within one person but between two individuals such as Karena and Joens.

Similarly, in 1706, Hanna Isaacksdotter was accused of having advised a woman on how to use urine to heal her sick husband.[10] The recommended healing ritual was to bury a new stoneware bottle with his urine at a crossroad outside the city.[11] Hanna Isaacksdotter had explained to the worried wife that this would help her husband to regain

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[8] Kvideland and Schmsdorf, *Scandinavian Folk Belief*, 47.

[9] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1728, Skåne, hundred of Luggude, Case vs Ellna Hansdotter (Arens 3:10).

[10] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1706, Skåne, city of Ystad, case vs Hanna Isaacksdotter (Arens 2:27 and 2:28).

[11] These stoneware bottles (*lerpoth*, *lerflaska*) were very popular across Europe. They were commonly known also as German bellarmines because they were originally imported from the Rhineland. Their use in magic is also documented from England and Germany where they were known as witch-bottles if filled with urine and buried under thresholds and hearths. For the most recent discussion of the use of witch-bottles in eighteenth-century England see Brian Hoggard, "The Archeology of Counter-Witchcraft and Popular Magic."

his health because as soon as a bird flew over the pot it would catch the husband's pain. Alternatively, if the first to step over the pot were a human then s/he would be afflicted with the same sickness affecting her husband. Hanna thus implied that either way the sick man would be healed because somebody else, be it bird or human, would take on his pain. Some time later, she advised Nills Trygeson's wife, who had come to ask the healer for help because her body was covered with a rash, to do the same.[12] To the local court, Hanna Isaacksdotter insisted that she had intended no evil with this ritual. Here, the body fluid was clearly employed as counter-magic, and it was explicitly stated that urine could carry the disease to someone else. In contrast to the physicians' use of urine to diagnose illness, urine was thought of as actively transferring the disease. Even with no skin contact, sickness and pain could move from one entity to another with the aid of body fluids. In our understanding, contagious diseases can be passed on by direct body contact, but the recovery of a patient does not come about because the disease has been transferred to somebody else.[13] The same body fluid could also be used in protective magical rituals. As late as the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, some healing rituals included spells and the use of urine, as in the following example against snakebite. While reciting the spell, one was supposed to blow three times on the urine and then wash the wound with it three times:

> The snake wound itself around the birch root.
> It bit our Lord Jesus in the foot.
> "Why did you bite me?" asked Jesus,
> "I did not know you were there", replied the snake.
> Hurt and burn yourself, you who bit me, and not I who was bitten!
> In the name of God, the Father
> The Son and the Holy Ghost![14]

The same understanding of urine as a counter-magical body fluid is also implied in its recommendation as protection against water spirits.[15]

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[12] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1706, Skåne, city of Ystad, case vs Hanna Isaacksdotter (Arens 2:27 and 2:28). For a discussion of skin rash as a magical disease see Tillhagen, *Folklig läkekonst*, 239–66. For an anthropological discussion of the social meaning of a rash see Strathern, "Why is Shame on the Skin?"

[13] Another example from Skåne in 1722 confirms the use of urine. In this case, the urine of the sick person was to be boiled with an egg. RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1722, Malmöhus county, hundred of Frosta, case vs Jacob Christiansson (Arens 3:3).

[14] Kvideland and Sehmsdorf, *Scandinavian Folk Belief*, 136–37.

[15] Tillhagen, *Vår kropp*, 296–302.

Similar magical qualities were attributed to sweat and saliva, and even excrement. Because sweat was regarded as containing power that could be used in magic, it was important to guard one's own secretions carefully from enemies. Tillhagen gives several examples from Sweden of how one's own sweat had to be protected from enemies or how the enemy's sweat could increase one's own strength. Sweat was also used to delegate sickness to others, including animals.[16] In the same way as urine and milk, sweat could function to transfer psychic power onto others and manipulate them, and it was therefore often employed in healing rituals. For example, in 1712, a woman was advised to heal her sick child by sleeping on its bedstraw in the name of Jesus Christ.[17]

Saliva, like other body waste, carried a person's life force and could therefore be employed in magic. For instance, spitting was regarded as a protection against the 'evil eye', and until the twentieth century, Swedish popular beliefs maintained that the saliva of people with special powers, such as Sunday children, firstborns, twins, or those born with a caul, was especially potent for this purpose. Significantly, taboos against spitting had to be observed particularly during church services.[18] Furthermore, saliva was also regarded as a healing agent. To spit three times into the stove "in the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost" could, for instance, stop toothache.[19]

Excrement could also work magic. In 1737 Arena Thomasdotter gave her husband a trace of human excrement to drink, in this way hoping to keep him away from the maid Bolla.[20] As a form of love magic, she materialized her jealousy in the transfer of bodily excrement to her husband, hoping to manipulate and redirect his desire. Strong emotions, such as jealousy and anger, were essential components in her body fluids, and, if powerful enough, would influence the self of her husband and change his desires. As persuasion with words did not seem powerful enough, she resorted to the inner power of her self and her emotions, rendered effective in its bodily form.

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[16] Ibid.

[17] LLA, 1712, Skåne, county of Malmöhus, hundred of Luggude, case vs Ellna Persdotter.

[18] Tillhagen, *Vår kropp*, 295–302.

[19] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 4, 1768, Västergötland, county of Skaraborg, hundred of Vartofta, bailiff Lars Gabriel Setterborg vs Stina Linneqwist.

[20] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1737, Skåne, Malmöhus county, Faers hundred, bailiff Daniel Schiernander vs Ellna Thomasdotter, Kierstina Larsdotter, Kierstina Olufsdotter, Arena Thomasdotter and Mätta Ofwedsdotter (Arens 3:19).

In conclusion, the social exchange between body and society took place in an active as well as in a passive way. The body was acted upon in witchcraft and magical healing, but it could also actively transform others. Body fluids such as urine and blood, and body parts such as hair, were actively employed in magical rituals either to harm or to heal people and animals. The question then arises as to which social power relations the use of magic sought to rearrange, rendering the body a field of action in the process.

Gendered Bodies and Gendered Magic

Especially relevant to this study is the question of whether the use of the body in witchcraft was gender-specific. In most historical studies, the body's magical qualities have been discussed with particular emphasis on the female body of the suspected witch. Diane Purkiss' study is a case in point here.[21] Purkiss argues that magic involved an exchange between bodies and, furthermore, that the female body was perceived as a threat to the social order, to men and other women alike. It was the formless female body which gained power by transcending the borders of bodies and households. The Swedish court cases would appear to support Purkiss' claim. Here, we find women's bewitchment of milk and of children as recurring themes in local witchcraft trials. In this context, women's concern was with the transformation of nourishing bodily fluids into poisonous, non-nutritive substances—in particular, milk turning to blood or foul liquid. The Swedish cases refer not so much to lactating women but frequently to cows which were under the care of the housewife. There are, however, some significant omissions in Purkiss' argument. It appears that the bewitchment of cows was attributed to women because dairy work was strictly women's work and men would avoid even entering the barn.[22] It was the gendered division of work and the association of dairy work with women that led to their being suspected of causing the pollution of milk, rather than a fear of the 'formless female body'.

Moreover, a considerable number of court cases concerning magic cannot be explained by the criterion which holds the female body as particularly suited to the performance of magic. How, for instance, do

[21] Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History*.
[22] Lena Sommestad, "Gendering Work, Interpreting Gender."

we explain that body fluids were employed to counteract witchcraft in both men and women, and that both men and women were able to deploy harmful magic to affect a victim's body? In 1741, Jöns Persson was accused of using faeces to perform witchcraft against a horse.[23] Persson admitted that he had taught a boy how to harm a horse by taking its strength away and giving it to another horse.

> Which he says happens in this way; that he shall take from the horse he wants to harm some excrement and give it to the other one which he wants to improve. Reading three times a Lord's Prayer backwards as well as renouncing God and giving himself with body and soul into the power of the Evil.[24]

Jöns Persson was accused by the local bailiff of cursing the horse which, in the bailiff's view, indicated an intent to perform witchcraft.

Male magic was also at the centre of a witchcraft case involving several men in Värmland who stood trial in 1757.[25] The soldier Johan Bratenberg was said to have twice cursed a farmer, Olof Göransson, saying "that he shall suffer misfortune and that he will lose horses". Olof's horses did indeed die and he took the soldier to court. Johan Bratenberg insisted that he, together with fellow-soldier Jons Westbom, had buried a dead cat under the stable so that "its natural poison would kill the horses".[26] But one cannot help thinking that the emphasis on the poisonous power of the animal's corpse was intended to deflect accusations of their having bewitched the horses.

Thus, in popular magic, both male and female bodies were affected by magical power in a passive way (as victims) or in an active way, using body fluids and body parts as carriers of magical power. The gendered distinction between male and female magic was not primarily based on sexual differences between male and female bodies. Although women had additional body fluids such as breast milk and menstrual blood at their magical disposal, gendered magic was not related to different qualities of the body, but was more significantly grounded in a gendered division of household and work responsibilities and in gendered social spaces. In this sense, women's embodiment differed from that of men,

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[23] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1741, Värmland, hundred of Fryksdal, case vs Olof Jonsson.

[24] Ibid.

[25] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1757, Värmland, hundred of Ölme. Johan Bratenberg vs Olof Göransson (Arens 4:2).

[26] Ibid.

and women's corporeal power was employed in different contexts, often reflecting power differences between women.[27] Thus, the social nature of the early modern body rendered it highly suitable as an indicator of the social and moral order.

The Body and the Moral Order

The body in early modern times formed an integral part of moral order, and somatic experiences were interpreted as reflecting moral and social relations.[28] People felt God's call or punishment, just as they could feel a liaison with the Devil, in their bodies. Illness and other bodily misfortunes were attributed to the envy and jealousy of neighbours, and the bodies of humans and animals were read as visible signs of the invisible moral order. The following section discusses the perceived links between the body and the moral order in eighteenth-century Sweden. The reproduction of bodies was an important part of the moral economy of the household. The body was thus related to gendered spaces within the household and consequently linked to gendered magic.

Because of the interconnection between self and society discussed in the previous chapter, when bodily misfortune struck an individual, it was interpreted as resulting from disturbed relationships within the moral and social order. The precise cause of illness, or the perceived underlying faulty relationship, was then subject to inquisition by both the individual concerned and the community. It was, therefore, implicitly assumed that the cause of the misfortune lay in the disturbance of the moral order. This order could find its expression, for instance, in the concept of "good neighbourhood".[29] Gregory deploys this term in a discussion of the importance of personal relations between neighbours in societies where order is maintained not by state control but by investing in personal relationships in the form of rituals, gifts, and hospitality.

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[27] I have discussed the relationship between power hierarchies among women and witchcraft in more detail elsewhere; Jacqueline Van Gent, "Female Magic and Women's Social Relations in Eighteenth-Century Sweden." For a discussion of women's embodiment and magic in early modern England, see Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies. Women, Touch and Power in Seventeenth-Century England*, 73–75.

[28] See also Mack, *Visionary Women*, 23, on feeling.

[29] Gregory, "Witchcraft, Politics and 'Good Neighbourhood'."

It is through the fulfillment of these mutual obligations that peace and control are constituted within a community.[30]

The violation of moral and social order often led to feelings of resentment and guilt, and manifested itself in physical pain. For example, in Värmland in 1761, a man suffered from cramps which he thought had been sent in anger by somebody.[31] Failing to meet social expectations could anger the wronged person, even years after the insult occurred. Failure to keep a promise of marriage, to lend some food, or to greet a person was often put forward as the cause for sudden pain and misfortune 'sent' as revenge by the offended party. In 1765, an act of revenge relating to events which had occurred five years earlier was reported in the county of Malmöhus.[32] The magical payback was directed against Jöns Andersson for his failure to marry the daughter of the widow, Kierstina Hermodsdotter. The angry mother and daughter sought the help of a wise woman from Denmark to bring sickness on Jön, his new wife, child, and horses. Aware of tensions between himself and Kristina, Jön accused the vengeful woman when misfortune struck him and his household. In this way, Jön's feelings of guilt could be transferred onto the supposed malice of the culprit. Such socially explosive relations between neighbours, where any misfortune was attributed to a fellow villager rather than to God, were confirmed in an answer to the questionnaire of the bishop of Lund thirty years later. In 1795, Dean Johan Gram, from the hundred of Ingelstad, wrote the following reply:

> Amongst the poor people, who work and strive as much as others, but have what they call discord with their animals [*mishäll på creatur*] and the harvest from fields and meadows is soon used up and will not be enough, so they interpret it often as that evil [*elaka*] people, particularly amongst their neighbours, know how to take the happiness [*trefnad*] away from them and draw it to themselves with the help of Devilish arts. Therefore many of these concerned people look for help and advice from a so-called wise man or woman.[33]

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[30] For obligations in gift exchange, see Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*.

[31] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1761, Värmland, hundred of Josse, case Jacob Eriksson vs Lars Larsson (Arens 4:18).

[32] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1765, Skåne, county of Malmöhus, hundred of Oxie, case Jöns Andersson vs Kierstina Hermotsdotter and Kierstina Hansdotter (Arens 4:27).

[33] Quoted in Bringéus, "Uppteckningar om vidskepelse i Lunds stift 1795," 92–93.

Here, the experience of social disadvantage was transformed into a cultural explanation: if health or prosperity were hindered or destroyed, it could be attributed to the envy or anger of individuals within the community. Such was the case in a trial in 1772, in the county of Kristianstad, where a woman was accused of having bewitched livestock such as pigs and calves, so that they became sick and died.[34]

In sickness and possession, the body displayed visible signs like cramps, bleeding, or the inability to take food—symptoms thought to be caused either by destructive emotions such as envy, anger, or the general ill-wishing of another person, or incurred as a punishment from God. In either case, misfortune was regarded as a spiritual intervention. In these ways, witchcraft and divine punishment provided the discourses for socially unacceptable feelings and tensions such as envy, jealousy, and anger.[35] Afflicted by sickness or possession, the individual translated an inner experience into the accepted cultural narratives of witchcraft or God's punishment. Popular belief linked the sickness to the inner self of others or the revenge of the dead, while Christianity attributed sickness to God or the Devil. In this process, somatic states of sickness and possession were linked to spiritual causes. Both body language and narrative structure conveyed this causality. For instance, sudden pain that crippled a victim was recognized and explained in court hearings as being caused by the supernatural powers of a witch.

Sometimes witnesses' depositions drew a causal link between the strange behaviour of a suspected witch and an ensuing illness of a member of the household without there being an obvious conflict, quarrel, or curse. In a case heard in Västergötland in 1723, Erich Nillson was called as a witness and told the court that two weeks before Easter, Ingeborg Larsdotter came to his house when only his wife, mother, and maid were at home. She asked where Erich was and his wife replied that he was with the blacksmith. Ingeborg left immediately without looking further for Erich and telling him what her enquiry was about. Erich found this behaviour very strange. On the following Friday, Erich's

[34] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 4, 1772, Skåne, county of Kristianstad, Hundred of Östra Göinge, Måns Swensson and Pernilla Månsdotter vs Lusse Knutsdotter (Arens 5:6).

[35] Marko Nenonen, "'Envious Are All The People"; O. Löfgren, "Lyckan och avunden"; and C. Holmes "Women: Witnesses and Witches." Holmes argues that to translate experiences into narratives and gestures was a social process (61) and that forbidden feelings were expressed and interpreted as possession (65). B. G. Alver and T. Selberg, "Folk Medicine as Part of a Larger Concept Complex," have explained envy as the driving force behind witchcraft by referring to Foster's theory of the limited good.

wife, who was well and healthy, went out to do the milking when she suddenly fell ill, could not move her head neither lift her hands to her mouth.[36] Other visible body signs identified as having a spiritual cause were long-term pain and the loss of body control in general and in particular, lameness.

The great value of early modern court records as sources for the analysis of somatic states lies in their detailed discussions of the meaning of pain and illness, enabling us to analyze the social meaning of the relationship between visible somatic signs and invisible moral causes. We can follow how in each case social relations, honour, and reputation were closely examined in order to decide whether an accused person had indeed performed the alleged magical act. In linking visible signs of the body to invisible causes in the macrocosm, the victim examined his or her social relationships because, as previously noted, in popular magic the cause of suffering was always located outside the victim. The intrusion from outside was, in Scandinavian folk belief, imagined as a sending. The sending which would suddenly afflict the victim—whether human or animal—was caused or instigated either by an ill-wishing person (the witch) or by a supernatural entity such as a water spirit, a spirit of the dead, or God. The victim in a case of either sickness or possession would be *visibly* not in control of himself or herself. The loss of control was manifest in bodily functions and life force, affirming the hypothesis that this sickness was not only a problem of the outer body but of the inner self. Loss of control and life force was an attack on the very essence of that person's inner self. Such an assault called for an examination of the victim's social relationships in order to find the 'sender'.[37] If the cause could be located, counter-magic could be performed. For this purpose, an expert was often asked for advice. The knowledgeable person, whether cunning person or healer, was believed to be able to see through the surface of things and locate the cause in the invisible outside realm; counter-magic would then be directed at the invisible cause, the sender, to achieve a reversal of the situation (sending back the sickness) and restore order. In 1705, the aforementioned healer Hanna Isaacksdotter suggested that her client bury a pot containing

[36] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1723, Västergötland, county of Älvsborg, hundred of Mark, case Börta Jönsdotter vs her mother Ingeborg Larsdotter (Arens 3:5).

[37] See Lena Gerholm, "Galenskap och djävulskap."

the urine of the sick person at the crossroad outside the city.[38] The first person to step over it or the first bird to fly over it would catch the disease. This ritual transferred the disease to the outside in both a social sense (outside the city gate) and a mythological one (at a crossroad). The disease could, therefore, be caught by an outsider (the first person to step over it) or by a wandering soul in the shape of a bird.

The idea that strong emotions could cause harm in the form of a skin rash or loss of milk—beliefs which were prevalent in Swedish witchcraft trials[39]—represents, at first glance, a fairly typical somatic state: we still believe today that suppressed negative emotions can result in a breakdown of the nervous system and cause pain. The difference between present-day Western society and people in early modern Sweden lies, I suggest, in the extent of the influencing factors that were called upon to explain the causes and effects. In contrast to today's patent individualism, the experience of somatic states in the past was not restricted to the individual but extended to the whole moral community and was, therefore, socially significant. Thus, feelings linked an individual's inner experience with the moral norms of society and cosmos.[40]

The somatic experience of the victim or their household was taken as evidence for tense social relations between victim and plaintiff. This causality was generally implied in a warning given by the insulted person: an indirect threat of inflicting harm. For instance, in 1727 on Walpurgis night, the village youths gathered under the window of Lame Kittan's house, singing "Our Lord free us from this evil troll, and Lame Kittan if she is at home".[41] Lame Kittan came out of the house and rebuked one of the boys, warning that he should not sneer at her, because "he would be surprised how soon he could become a cripple (*stakkare*)". The insulted woman defended herself by threatening, through her special powers, to inflict bodily pain on the offender. *Stakkare*, as the court records explained, was a local term for people who became frail and ailing in their bodies. The precise image of the *stakkare* reinforced the popular notion of a fading and weakening body

[38] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1706, Skåne, city of Ystad, case vs Hanna Isaacksdotter (Arens 2:27).

[39] For a discussion on envy and magic in Scandinavia see Nenonen, "'Envious Are All the People'"; and Sehmsdorf, "Envy and Fear in Scandinavian Folk Tradition."

[40] John Blacking, ed., *The Anthropology of the Body*, 5.

[41] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1727, Skåne, county of Kristianstad, hundred of Gärds, bailiff Zacharias Gram vs Märta Bengtsdotter (Arens 3:7): "Wår Herre fri oss ifån den onda tråll, och Halte Kittan när hon är fåll."

whose life force had been taken by a witch. When one of the boys came to harm shortly after this event, it was attributed to the curse of this woman, who was then taken to court.

A disturbed social and natural order manifested itself in visible signs of chaos and distortion: the loss of life force in humans and animals, loss of milk in cows and nursing mothers, loss of potency, fits, immoral language and obscene behaviour, pain, epilepsy, and madness.[42] However on analysis of the causes and meanings of these signs, it becomes evident that people in early modern Sweden had choices and agency. We have acknowledged that bodily signs were understood in eighteenth-century Sweden as the visible display of moral and social tensions, and that the interconnectedness of body and mind and the culturally defined somatic states such as sickness or possession were not doubted; the difference in interpreting these conditions lay in the question as to where exactly to locate the tension. In popular discourse, witnesses at the court attributed power to the inner selves of their fellow villagers, which made it credible for emotions such as anger and envy to materialize in disease and misfortune. Christian doctrine, on the other hand, emphasized that the ultimate spiritual cause of all good and evil lay in God. That such choices existed with regard to early modern interpretations of illness is evident in the following case, where two women confronted each other about what constituted an appropriate way of healing pain. In 1762, a peasant's wife, Karna Germundsdotter, was called before the assize court of the hundred of Gärds, and was accused by the bailiff of having used superstitious healing.[43] Her defence was recorded in the manuscript as follows:

> For three years now she had not had one healthy day, but was burdened with an illness which started with a shooting pain in her right side, since then it spread over her whole body. To regain her health she threw her sweepings under the stone bridge in Nöbbelöf's streamlet on three Thursday mornings. For her ailment she had intended to visit a wise man, but on her way to him she got to know that he had died some years ago. On her way home she met a maid who told her about the ritual described

[42] The fear of epilepsy, or 'falling sickness' (*fallande sjukdom*) was widespread. Numerous cases report the anxiety of mothers about the epileptic fits of their children and the help they sought from folk healers—for example, in RA, GHA, HRT vol. 4, 1765 Skåne, county of Malmöhus, hundred of Oxie, where Kierstina Hansdotter was reported "to have healed Truls Nillson's children who had the falling sickness."

[43] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1762, Skåne, county of Kristianstad, hundred of Gärds, bailiff Zacharias Gram vs Karna Germundsdotter (Arens 4:21).

above: On three Thursday mornings, before sunrise, to sweep the floors of her room and to throw it into a running stream.[44]

Karna's neighbour, Iertrud Nielsdotter, on being called to the court as a witness, admitted that after some men told her about Karna's strange behaviour she went with several others to the stream to look at what Karna had thrown out. There, she confronted Karna, asking her the reason for this act. When Karna replied that she had done this for her health, Iertrud Nielsdotter snapped: "I have also been sick but I have not done such things, instead I trusted in God".[45] Furthermore, the bailiff accused Karna of having mentioned a water spirit, though she denied this at the court. Karna defended herself, saying that she had said these things in a delirium since the illness had attacked her so suddenly that she did not know what she had seen or said. This example shows that villagers employed a variety of explanations and spiritual approaches to healing. Similarly, the following narrative about a girl who was suspected by her family of being possessed, attributes the reason for her pain to a spiritual cause.

On the Tuesday following St Martin's Day in 1709, Söster Hyphauff, the seventeen-year-old daughter of a priest in Skåne, was frightened in the darkness "as if she had come across something evil".[46] Later, at dinner, she complained about a sudden pain in her right thumb. The pain was so strong and affected her hand to such an extent that she was unable to hold a knife. After nine o'clock that night, the pain extended its power over her whole hand, until finally it was so strong that she cried in pain for three nights and days. On the surface, nothing but a little brown mark could be seen on the finger. The pain became so bad that the parents sent to the pharmacist to get Theriac,[47] but its application had no effect. After three days, again at nine o'clock at night, the pain spread further to the left shoulder and side, and down into the thigh "with strong movements as if there was something living in it, leaving her no peace, be it night or day".[48] After three days of uninterrupted pain, a new stage of suffering began for Söster as she

[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Bror Gadelius, *Tro och ofvertro i gångna tider*, 170–201.
[47] Ibid., p. 172, n. 1: "Theriac was a universal means against all diseases. In its composition it changed very much and consisted of many, up to 67 different and at times contradictory, elements. In the beginning of last century [nineteenth] this was a very popular means amongst the peasants."
[48] Ibid., 172.

began "to phantasise that she was surrounded by many people dancing and jolly".[49] Söster's family decided that the invisible cause of her sufferings was a punishment by God for the immoral behaviour of the community, sending the Devil into her body. To restore her health, it was necessary to perform an exorcism.

Although somatic states such as sickness and possession represented magic, their origins could be interpreted variously as witchcraft, spirits, or God's punishment; and therefore the counter-magic could be either magical healing or exorcism. Karna Germundsdotter was taken to court because she chose to perform a magical healing ritual as counter-magic for her pain, while in the case of Söster Hyphauff, suffering was diagnosed as possession, and a public exorcism performed. Both women suffered from pain spreading in a very distinct pattern through the body, indicating to the two victims that their diseases were of unnatural origin. The causes were invisible but gave particular meaning to the pain. Relief could come only by curing the invisible cause, which in each case was spiritual and located in the macrocosm. The difference between the meanings of the two stories lay in the particular way in which each conceptualized the macrocosm. For Karna, the pain could be sent away by collecting the sweepings of the floor of her cottage and throwing them into the river. She thus sent the disease (contained in the sweat on the sweepings) back to the water spirit. But clearly this interpretation of the cause, and the meaning of her suffering, was socially unacceptable to some sections of her community, because the bailiff took her to court. Söster, on the other hand, interpreted the meaning of her pain rather differently, which influenced the kind of counter-magic employed. The Devil was driven out of the body of Söster with the help of exorcism and public prayer of the entire congregation. This leads us to a consideration of the body and morality.

Suffering Bodies and Social Dishonour

As discussed in Chapter One, the attribution of honour was an important issue in local court cases concerning magic. Given a belief system that linked somatic disturbances of the body with disturbances of the social and moral order, it is not surprising that, in early modern

[49] Ibid., 172.

Sweden, illness and pain could be attributed to dishonourable people or behaviour. The body, therefore, acted as a 'moral barometer', to borrow a term from Paul Farmer,[50] measuring external social and emotional pressure.

Bodily signs such as the drying-up of milk and uncontrollable weeping and bleeding were familiar to Swedish people in the eighteenth century, and their moral meanings were carefully debated. This morality was not exclusively 'read' by the mind, but it was *felt* in the body. The body reacted to conflicts and to cursing. As discussed in more detail in Chapter Two, Nils Gummundson lost his potency and "his private part was almost withered away" because of Kerstin Persdotter's magic, to which she resorted out of jealousy.[51] Animal bodies also reacted to moral tensions. Carl Bengtson and his wife lost part of their livestock because they refused to buy a piece of the so-called white snake from a wandering beggar woman. The woman became very angry and took revenge by cursing the wife: "That Carl's wife shall lose what she loves most". The next day, one of the goats fell sick and died. This act of *maleficium* could be understood as a double insult to Carl by implying that it was the goat whom his wife loved most. Shortly after Christmas, a calf died and two mares became very sick.[52] Thus, emotions could become a direct physical force, and magic was constructed as a moral force with physical effects.[53]

Strong anti-social emotions were often the motivators underlying magic which affected the body. The most powerful emotions believed to cause distorted moral and social relations, and which were thus associated with harmful magic, were envy, anger, and jealousy; ill-wishing neighbours, jealous spouses, and angry people could harm their neighbours through magic. Negative emotions were seen not only as the motivation but also the carrier for magic; words said in anger could cause harm. Because they threatened the social order, they could

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[50] Paul Farmer, "Bad Blood, Spoiled Milk."

[51] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, Småland, county of Kalmar, hundred of Sevede, Nils Gummundson vs Kerstin Persdotter (Arens 2:19).

[52] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1764, Småland, county of Kronoberg, hundred of Sunnerbo, Carl Bengtson vs Nils Johansson and his wife Kierstin Nilsdotter. On morality and bodily cleanliness/uncleanliness in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Sweden, see the discussion by Jonas Liliequist who also argued that dishonesty was evident in bodily pollution, and that the body reflected morality. This relationship existed also between humans and animals; for instance some cows were reported to have reacted aversely to men who had committed sodomy; Liliequist, *Brott, synd och straff*, esp. 146–50.

[53] Michael Jackson, "Thinking Through The Body," 132.

not be expressed publicly but formed instead semi-official discourses such as gossip, rumours, envy, enmity, and ill-wishing. Jöns Andersson found himself the target of harmful witchcraft because of the anger of the widow Kierstina Hermodsdotter whose daughter he, against his original agreement, refused to marry. Kierstina was so enraged that she planned to employ a wise woman from Denmark who recommended her "to take some splinters from his door step to harm his animals and to smear something on his fur coat so that he shall fall in love with the widow's daughter". Furthermore, it was alleged, Kierstina hoped that "with these superstitions they could harm Jöns Andersson's [new] wife and cause her to bear a sick child". In court, the women asserted that they had not executed their evil plans and Jöns Andersson, interestingly, protected Kierstina Hermodsdotter by stating that he had not suffered any harm but that he had ascribed this "unsubstantiated talk" to another woman who became enemies with the widow and "had chosen to sow enmity between [him and Kierstina]".[54] Conflicts within the moral community were negotiated through magic.

The relationship between the behaviour of 'immoral' people and the somatic experience of illness has been so far best researched in the field of sexual immorality and I shall briefly focus on this before moving back to the witchcraft trials.[55] In discussing this relationship with reference to early modern England, Laura Gowing noted that:

> As whoredom damaged the body, so it endangered the corpus of the household. Most defamations directed their complaints at a particular sphere: the effects of fornication, adultery, and bawdry upon household order.[56]

Signs of disease (pocky, rotten organs) were believed to be the visible signs of whoredom.[57] Gowing went on to argue that sexual dishonesty was believed to pollute not only the household, but also the street and

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[54] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 4, 1765, Skåne, county of Malmöhus, hundred of Oxie, Jöns Andersson vs Kierstina Hermotsdotter and Kierstina Hansdotter (Arens 4:27).

[55] For discussions of the link between sickness and disturbed moral relations in other pre-modern European settings see, for example, Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*; C. Orobitg, "Between Evil and Malady," 178.

[56] Gowing, "Gender and the Language of Insult," 13.

[57] "As these disruptions—emotional upsets, financial losses, the making cuckolds of men and bawds of women—accumulate, they endanger the whole basis of household order: male control. The adulterous husband loses control of his money, the cuckold husband loses control of his female property, and both are consumed outside the household." Ibid., 16.

entire neighbourhood. Therefore, whores were confined to certain quarters of the city and brothels situated outside the city walls.[58] In Sweden, a similarly polluting quality was ascribed to women regarded as whores, who were in fact not prostitutes but unmarried mothers. In his study on unmarried women in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Swedish peasant society, Jonas Frykman analyzed the notion that an unmarried mother ('whore') was thought to cause rickets among neighbouring children, and this condition in small children was accordingly called whore fever (*horeskäver*). Following the argument that sickness reflects social experiences, Frykman discusses how rickets reflected the relationship between the mother of the ailing child and the 'whore'.[59] Frykman demonstrates how the social meaning of whoredom and its relation to the somatic experience of rickets was grounded in the imbalance of the social order. In Swedish folk imagination, the 'whore' was not dangerous as such, but only caused rickets if she behaved in ways that were inappropriate to her social position. What was appropriate behaviour for her was defined in relation to her counterpart, the honourable married mother. The 'whore's' moral insult was an insult only to a young, married mother and, in turn, caused only her baby's body to sicken. The somatic state of rickets was, in retrospect, given meaning by the overtly inappropriate behaviour of the whore in a particular situation—for instance, not wearing the whore scarf; entering the church before a married woman; sitting at her place in the church; or seeing a newborn baby before baptism. Rickets was a visible sign of a disturbed invisible moral order which could only be put to rights by wise people. Married women were the norm-giving institution, and any danger from a whore acquired meaning as a violation of the social hierarchy only in regard to married women.[60]

The salient point in Frykman's argument is that in popular culture, meaning was not fixed but fluid, and dependent on the social situation.[61] In both discourses of witchcraft and whoredom, people were not dangerous as such, but only became so if they did not behave according to their social position. If disaster struck, meaning in both cases was attributed in retrospect to otherwise neutral words and rituals.

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[58] Ibid., 17.
[59] Jonas Frykman, *Horan i bondesamhället*, 26.
[60] Ibid., 58–61.
[61] Ibid., 55.

One of the important differences between these two cultural explanations of somatic states of illness is that the discourse of the whore restricts the special meaning of the metaphor of illness (rickets) to married women with children. Frykman showed that a meeting between a man and a 'whore' could imply luck.[62] In the context of magic, the danger was potentially universal and therefore much more unpredictable.[63] Certainty as to the intent of a magical act could be established by scrutinizing the reputation of the suspect. In court, this reputation was constructed variously not only by accusations and by the defence but also in the testimonies of the witnesses, which as mentioned previously have often been overlooked in witchcraft research. As discussed in Chapter One, witnesses often referred to events which occurred many years previously and which were quite independent of the present dispute. In doing so, they broadened the scope of testimony to relate to the overall social standing and honour of the suspect. Peasants and jurors commonly shared the assumption that people with bad morals were more likely to disturb the community order (witchcraft) while people with good morals acted in the interest of the community (healing, finding lost things). The question on which priests, jurors, and peasants differed was that of what constituted good morals. Some priests acknowledged that pious people could heal, while peasants saw the very fact that they could heal as confirmation of divine grace. During the eighteenth century, however, priests seemed to become more active in questioning this causality by taking more healers to court on the grounds of superstition and blasphemy.

Social Permeability of Bodily Borders

This section examines how the social and spiritual exchange between bodies and the moral community were represented as a form of osmosis in eighteenth-century Sweden. The osmotic process refers to the influence that mental powers had over the body: intruding spirits were imagined as the selves of other people. These thoughts could either harm the body so that it would sicken; or, in counter-magic such as exorcism and healing, this 'other' power would drive out the harmful

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[62] Ibid., 78.

[63] For a discussion of honour for men and women, compare also K. Telste, "'Boys Should Ask and Girls Should Say No'."

spirits. By nature, osmosis is not a free flow but a filtration, its permeability is conditioned. Thus, in circumstances of uncertain identity, body borders were carefully watched, while in situations of clearly defined identity, body controls were relaxed. If we consider that the integrity of the body was synonymous with the integrity of the social and psychic identity of an individual, any violation or healing of the body would also carry a social meaning.

It is clear that in many cases which came under the jurisdiction of the Göta Appellate Court it was believed that thoughts had the power to cause physical harm. One case which illustrates this is the trial of Johanna Hansdotter. In 1707, Johanna Hansdotter had to stand trial in the city of Ystad in Skåne where it was alleged she had harmed several people by her curses.[64] It was reported that she caused bodily harm in the form of sickness because she felt offended and took revenge on the offenders or a proxy person close to the offender. Two men accused Johanna of inflicting pain on themselves and their families. First, the citizen Ebbe Jönsson stated to the court that some years previously, in 1695, Bolla, Johanna's daughter, had served at his farm and caused him some annoyance, whereupon he punished her. Johanna had come into the house when Ebbe Jönsson was not at home and had prophesied that great misery would befall him. Her prediction came true when a short time later his daughter fell ill. The original Swedish expression in the records emphasizes the conceptual link between her illness and the magical cause: she "became sick and taken away" (*blef siuk och bort-tagen*). Since that day, it was said, she had been a wretched person.[65] On another occasion, Johanna threatened Jönsson's wife with disaster at the place of Rasmussen Bengtson the shoemaker, whereupon Nills Palsson's daughter, who had come to them in service, fell sick and her flesh was torn away, so that she had become a bedridden cripple.[66] Another male witness supported this dire accusation with his own story. Sifver Ifwerdson reported that at seven o'clock on the previous Michaelmas evening, Johanna Hansdotter called out three times in front of his door, saying she was looking for her brother-in-law, and while doing so was knocked over by a boy. When Sifver Ifwerdson ran to the door and asked her to be quiet, she answered, "The Devil (*Fanen*) shall get in you.

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[64] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1707, Skåne, county of Malmöhus, city of Ystad, case vs Johanna Hansdotter (Arens 2:30).
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.

You shall be struck by a disaster". The following day, as he rode out, his horse stumbled and his right arm was dislocated. Johanna explained to the court that she had not meant to curse Sifver Ifwerdson but the boy who knocked her over.[67] Both witnesses in this case linked a sign of bodily sickness to a clear cause—the ill-wishing of Johanna Hansdotter. Thus a causal connection was made more plausible by the description of the circumstances, both of which involved her being insulted, which in turn incited her malevolence. This reasoning forms the basis of a logic of magic that was generally accepted: bodily harm was caused by emotional and social tensions. These tensions were often caused by or addressed to people who did not originally belong to the household in question, but who entered it as servants and were regarded as more likely to breach the order of the household body. Servants were particularly vulnerable because they belonged only temporarily to the farm household they were serving. Their loyalty was conditional and they could move to another farm in autumn when the contracts were made. Servants exchanged news with other servants and were well-informed about the private matters of farms in the village.[68] Hence, they might be viewed as liminal household members, only contingently loyal to the internal order of the household and perilously likely to breach its social boundaries.

The social permeability of the household body was, most importantly, exploited by sending female servants to another farm under some pretence to fetch things for their mistresses, a ruse that was regarded as especially useful in the conduct of magical acts. For example, Elin Jonsdotter was allegedly forced by her mistress, Sara Gummesdotter, to milk the cow of a neighbour, David Compass. The stolen milk was used the following day in a magical ritual to feed their own cow, with the intention of increasing her milk production. Compass's cow was reported to be "weak and sick" from that day on.[69] Likewise, Catharina Duren sent her servant to a farm to ask its workers to urinate in a bottle as a counter-magical ritual.[70] These social breaches signified the transgression of bodily, as well as social, borders.

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[67] Ibid.

[68] Liliequist, *Brott, synd och straff*, 40, notes that often servants spread the rumour about indecent behaviour.

[69] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1760, Småland, county of Kalmar, hundred of Norra-More Ingrid Jonsdotter vs Sara Gummesdotter (Arens 4:12).

[70] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1762, Småland, county of Kronoberg, hundred of Kinnevald, case bailiff Amund Branting vs Catharina Duren (Arens 4:22).

Body fluids were perceived to be particularly suitable as a means of osmotic interchange.[71] They were regarded as an indicator of morality, and bad thoughts could cause physical changes in body fluids. It was believed that milk, for example, could be turned into blood by envious thoughts.[72] The motif of milk turning into blood is repeated in the motif of butter that bleeds if cut with a knife, and this bleeding butter was a sign of bewitchment. In one case, the widow Anna Andersdotter reported that after she had given Karin Mansdotter some milk, the milk of her own cows deteriorated and did not make butter anymore. She accused Karin of causing this "witch-butter" (*trollsmör*). Karin, meanwhile, had taken some butter made from this milk to a wise woman who had found that it "was full of blood and bloody pus". Karin remarked that Anna had owed her some money, which was why she gave her the milk.[73] Bodily fluids like urine, saliva, and blood were used in magical acts, their fluidity becoming a source of danger in certain socially ambiguous situations. People attempted to minimize the ambiguity by performing protection rituals, which also used fluids. In 1762, it was reported to the court of the hundred of Kinnevald that Catharina Duren had performed a ritual of milk protection on New Year's Day. Before sunrise, and while remaining silent, her maid took a milk churn half-filled with buttermilk and went to ask the neighbour's household to "do their personal business" into the churn. This, it was believed, would "ensure better butter-luck and that it shall never be bewitched so that she cannot get any butter". In later witnesses' testimonies, neighbouring women insisted that Catharina Duren had no luck with her butter and sent her maid to ask the children of the suspected witch to urinate into the churn, but they refused.[74]

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[71] When this osmotic relation was disturbed, a conflict was seen to be the cause. Thus, bewitchment became visible because the flow of energy was interrupted. For instance, the drying up of cows was believed to be an expression of bewitchment. See RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 15 October 1760, Småland, county of Kalmar, Norra More hundred, case sheriff Peter Frodin vs boatsman's wife Sara Gummesdotter (Arens 4:12). In this case, the accused had attempted to manipulate bodily fluids by giving her own cow stolen milk from the neighbour's cow in a ritual on a holy day, "early in the morning" to eat so it would increase the cow's milk flow.

[72] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1723, Västergötland, county of Älvsborg, hundred of Mark, Börta Joensdotter vs her mother Ingeborg Larsdotter (Arens 3:5).

[73] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 4, 1770–1772, Småland, county of Kalmar, hundred of Södra More, case widow Anna Andersdotter vs boatsman's wife Karin Mansdotter.

[74] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1762, Småland, Kronoberg county, Kinnevald hundred, case bailiff Amund Branting vs sergeant major's wife Catharina Duren (Arens 4:22).

The exchange between inside and outside was manifest in the capacity of magic to effect change upon body fluids, and the notion that these fluids transmitted the invisible power of their owner. The interconnectedness between body and environment was reflected in the belief that body fluids reacted very susceptibly and quickly to emotional tensions. Changes such as milk turning dry or into blood, or uncontrollable body fluids, such as excessive weeping, were seen as signs of distorted moral relations. Changes in body fluids were thought to be a passive indicator of social tensions. Body fluids, however, were not only passive signposts but could also assume active roles in magical activities because of their capacity as a carrier of an individual's personal psychic power. This was the reason that in all forms of magic such as harming, healing, love magic, and exorcism, body fluids such as urine, saliva, milk, blood and excrement played an important role.[75]

One body fluid which has recently attracted significant attention in research on magic and witchcraft is milk.[76] In most studies, milk has been represented as a passive agent in magic and as being closely associated with the female body. Roper has described cases in which young mothers accused their lying-in maid of drying up their milk as being a typical scenario for witchcraft accusations in sixteenth-century Augsburg.[77] The link between breast milk and magic is also evident in Scandinavian material.[78] Folklore legends warned young mothers to protect their breasts against the 'evil eye' and jealous people.[79] However, I would suggest that milk was used as both a passive and an active agent in early modern magic, and that milk magic was not restricted to breast milk, but was often also suspected when supplies of cow's milk dwindled. It is important to analyze milk magic because its use was reported in a

[75] Cow's milk was used for milk magic. RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1760, Småland, county of Kalmar, hundred of Norra-More, Elin Jonasdotter vs Sara Gummesdotter (Arens 4:12). Urine and blood were used in healing or love magic rituals as described in Kvideland and Sehmsdorf, *Scandinavian Folk Belief*, 137.

[76] Purkiss, *The Witch in History*, 94–99; Willis, *Malevolent Nurture*; Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*; and Wall, *Tjuvmjlkande väsen*.

[77] Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, 208–14.

[78] Tillhagen, *Vår kropp*, 315–17. In Swedish folklore, breast milk was regarded as a healing agent for sore and red eyes and for sore ears. Tillhagen explains that sometimes a cream was made from breast milk and spread into the ear against pain. For a discussion of medieval notions of mystical properties of breast milk see C. W. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, 173, on Catherine of Siena's discussion of breast milk, and 179 on medieval philosophy regarding breast milk as concocted blood.

[79] Tillhagen, *Vår kropp*, 315. For a discussion of English witchcraft and the fear of drying up of breast milk see D. Willis, *Malevolent Nurture*, 59.

variety of situations and affected not just individual bodies, but the whole household 'body', including the bodies of cows belonging to the farm. All cases of milk magic were attributed to women only, and women's bodies were closely associated with all forms of milk magic.

In Sweden, while the lactating mother had to protect her own breast milk from harm she could, in turn, use this milk to influence others. Breast milk was used for healing disease thought to have been caused by magic. In a trial against a soldier's wife from Småland, two women testified how the suspect diagnosed their sick children as "having a kind of epilepsy (*fallande siukan*)" and offered to heal them. To this end, she

> made a cross with her hand over the child's chest, prayed something in a gentle voice, and took some drops of human blood to mix it with women's milk as well as adding something she called *wettalius* and gave it the child to drink.[80]

In neither case did the children survive. In a more practical use, the work mood of servants was thought to be influenced by dropping the breast milk of the farmer's wife onto their bread.[81] Milk reflected moral relations in active use, as in healing, as well as in passive display as an indicator of social harmony and morality.

Swedish court cases, however, are only occasionally concerned with milk magic affecting women's breasts, and instead reflect a widespread concern for the possible bewitchment of cow's milk. The drying-up of milk was a very common sign of magical harm having been done to a cow. Sweden is not an isolated case in this regard, for German prohibitions against milk magic were already recorded in legal texts of the ninth century.[82] When women accused each other of witchcraft, it was frequently over responsibility for a cow's loss of milk. In 1728, we have two telling examples from the same assize court in the hundred of Luggude. In the first case, a widow named Kirstina Andersdotter reported how another witness, the servant maid Sissa, had several times been at her house and asked her repeatedly to show her the way to

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[80] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1757, county of Jönköpping, hundred of Östra, case vs the soldier's wife Ewa Swensdotter. The plant referred to as "wettalius" is *vätteljus*, deriving from *vätte* = fairy or gnome, which emphasizes the magical connection.

[81] Tillhagen, *Vår kropp*, 317.

[82] See for a discussion of *Milchhexe* in Germany and in other European countries, E. Hoffmann-Krayer and Hanns Bächtold-Stäubli, eds., *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens*, col. 293–352.

Karena Persdotter in Kågered, whom she intended to ask for advice, because her cows' milk had turned bad.[83] In the same year, and in front of the same local assize court of the hundred of Luggude, Ellna Hansdotter was accused by the lord of the manor of having, with the help of a so-called milk hare, dried up his cows, so that either they would not give milk or the milk turned bad (into blood).[84] Independently, several witnesses supported this accusation by giving evidence that Ellna Hansdotter had on several previous occasions been suspected of causing sickness (bad milk, fading away) in cows. All three witnesses were women. These accusations, in this case relating to several incidents, implied that the suspect had negative and disturbing attitudes towards these women. This character trait was supported by several witnesses, who described how easily she would get angry and then use explicit curses towards her neighbours.

These two examples, like most cases concerning milk magic in Sweden, were concerned with harming cows and the decline of their milk. The drying-up of cow's milk was understood as a weakening not just of the animal's body, but of the body of the whole household. It is especially interesting to note that in the latter story we find a direct association between women's bodies and the supernatural theft of cow's milk. Ellna was accused of sending out a milk-hare to steal milk from her neighbours' cows.[85] The hare was undoubtedly linked to her body, as it was believed that a milk-hare was created from the blood of its owner, and would always return the stolen milk to increase the milk output of its owner's cows.[86]

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[83] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, Malmöhus county, Luggude hundred, 1728, case Jöns Truedson vs Karena Persdotter (Arens 3:9). In this case, the Swedish title 'maid' (*piga*) indicates Sissa's unmarried status and her social position as servant. Married women were addressed as *hustru*.

[84] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, Malmöhus county, Luggude hundred, 1728, case vs Ellna Hansdotter (Arens 3:10).

[85] An exhaustive study was compiled on this motif in Scandinavia by Jan-Inge Wall, *Tjuvmjölkande väsen*, 2 vols. See also B. Nildrin-Wall and Jan-Inge Wall, "The Witch as Hare or the Witch's Hare." For other European countries, see the compilation by E. Hoffmann-Krayer and Hanns Bächtold-Stäubli, eds., *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens*, col. 319–26, which lists as milk stealing demons not only cats but also dragons, hares, butterflies, and other animals.

[86] The milk hare was thought to be made by the sorceress. The ingredients varied from province to province, but it seems that it always had to be created on a Thursday and that three drops of blood from the left little finger were a vital ingredient. Compare Lennart Björkquist, "Kreatursskydd och kreatursbot," 85–86. See also Tillhagen, *Folklig läkekonst*, 134 and Nildin-Wall and Wall, "The Witch as Hare or the Witch's Hare," 67–68.

In many Swedish cases of cows losing milk, a married village woman (*hustru*) was accused by a maid (*piga*). Even if the lord of the manor issued the case at the court, as in the case of Ellna Hansdotter discussed above, it was the maid who was the crown witness and who raised the accusation first. Since maids held a socially lower status, such an affront to honour could not easily be put forward directly. The maid therefore did not accuse another village woman of having harmed her directly, but of having harmed the cows that were the property of her master.[87]

In a similar way to the lying-in maids studied by Roper, servants on Swedish farms were often regarded as temporary members of the household.[88] They, too, crossed the boundaries of the household, coming from the outside, and were therefore the first to be suspected of violating body borders and causing illness. This happened in the case of Måns Swensson and his wife, Pärnilla Månsdotter, who suspected their maid, Lusse Knutsdotter, of harming their animals.[89] Lusse accused her stepmother of having initiated *maleficium* against the Swensson household by using Lusse's access to her master's farm animals. Lusse claimed that her stepmother had forced her, while visiting her parents at home, to agree to cut hair from the animals and bring the clippings to her, which she had done. Whether the servant girl was indeed ordered by her stepmother to harm the animals of the farm where she served or whether the household's mistress initiated this story as a clever tactic to ruin the stepmother's reputation, both scenarios emphasize the ambiguous position of the servant in accessing the most important asset of the farm in the daily routine of tending animals and, in particular, milking cows, while actually belonging to another, potentially competitive, household.

The sign of milk turning bad, that is into blood, or having been drawn away so the cow was weakening and dying, indicated *maleficium*. In Sweden to 'milk blood' was to harm cows deliberately through magic. The servant girl Karin Olufzdotter was ordered by her mistress to milk the cow of another farmer so they could use the milk to perform a

[87] On the association of disorderly household and the change of milk to blood see also Purkiss, *The Witch in History*, 94–99.

[88] Hanssen, "The Oikological Approach"; D. Gaunt, "Familie, Haushalt und Arbeitsintensität."

[89] RA, GHA, HRT. vol. 4, 1772, Skåne, county of Kristianstad, hundred of Östra Göinge, Måns Swensson and Pärnilla Månsdotter vs Lusse Knutsdotter.

milk-increasing ritual for their own cows on Easter morning.[90] Karin admitted in court that

> she took hair from Johan's horse and the next afternoon she milked his cow and cut hair from its tail and two days later she milked Måns' cow, pouring the milk on a piece of bread, so that the cow would milk blood.[91]

The two farmers, Johan and Måns, confirmed in court that "their mare died immediately thereafter, and ox and cows became very bad the following day, particularly those cows which milked blood".[92] In this case, the mistress' defence was that she had not intended to harm her neighbours' animals, but instead to use this stolen milk to increase the milk of her own cows. The servant girl had witnessed how this ritual was performed by her mistress on Easter morning:

> She [the maid] took the milk, filled it in a bottle and placed it in the crib in front of the cow's head. On Easter morning the mistress herself took this bottle and gave this milk to her cow and said: "The leading cow has kept all your milk from the day since the witches [*Trållbakorne*] have flown by—for you to power and strength and for me to use and profit". Maria Pehrsdotter, the mistress, insisted to the court that this was intended as a protection from "evil people and other misfortune".[93]

This ritual clearly demonstrates the transfer of milk-luck through magic. It also recalls that the ambiguity of magical rituals was very strong. Milk would be withdrawn to add it actively to one's own household. The household harmed in this manner would not only lose the stolen milk, but their cows would be seriously harmed: from then on, the cow would give blood instead of milk, then weaken and finally die. This logic is grounded in the logic of 'luck' as a limited good—one person's gain could come only at the expense of another.[94] Thus, the accusation of somebody 'milking blood' was a severe one. This was the case for Ingeborg Larsdotter, whose own daughter, Börta, reported that she had

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[90] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1691, Småland, county of Jönköping, hundred of Norra Vedbo, Måns i Rossmäte vs Maria Pehrsdotter.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid.

[94] On the theory of the limited good and its application in Scandinavia see Sehmsdorf, "Envy and Fear in Scandinavian Folk Tradition"; also Alver and Selberg "Folk medicine as part of a larger concept complex," esp. 29–30.

> badly beaten and treated her, gave her bad and evil advice and had taught her Devil's art so to bring her into the power of Evil for which her mother will have to answer God on the Last Day of Judgement[95]

One of the Devil's arts that Börta claimed to have been taught by her mother was to milk blood from neighbours' cows with the help of a girdle.[96] Such bewitchment could still be detected even after the stolen milk had been processed into butter or cheese. The cheese was red, as Börta insisted in the court case described above, because it had been made from milked blood. In other cases blood would pour out of the butter when cut with a knife, particularly if cut by a wise woman.[97]

I suggest that the signs of spoiled breast milk and spoiled cow's milk were interchangeable because they fulfilled the same function. The victim translated a personal feeling of moral intrusion by another woman into a known image of folk religion, that of spoilt milk. The option of complaining about dried-up breast milk was restricted to breastfeeding mothers, while the complaint about dried-up cows was open to every woman and to maids in particular. The drying-up of cow's milk and of breast milk carried the same meaning: a female had fallen victim to the powerful malignant wishes of another woman. Dairy work was a female domain[98] and cows were symbolically connected with the honour of the farmer's wife. Any harm done to the cow could be perceived as an insult to the woman. The feeling of being intruded upon or of threat to personal space and honour was the motivation of the 'victim' to launch an accusation of witchcraft. The bodily sign of bad milk provided the link between a personal feeling of being intruded upon and the local culture that accepted ill-wishing people as being able to cause dried-up milk.[99]

Body Parts as Seats of Personal Power

The magical exchange between body and society often targeted specific body parts because they were believed to be the seat of personal

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[95] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1723, Västergötland, county of Älvsborg, hundred of Mark, Börta Joensdotter vs her mother Ingeborg Larsdotter (Arens 3:5).

[96] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1723, Västergötland, county of Älvsborg, hundred of Mark, Börta Joensdotter vs her mother Ingeborg Larsdotter (Arens 3:5).

[97] Ibid.

[98] Sommestad, "Gendering Work, Interpreting Gender."

[99] To milk blood was always seen as being caused by ill-wishing and envious people.

power. Body parts have been associated since antiquity with the life force of a person, but the meanings of bodily metaphors underwent significant changes during the medieval period, as Jacques Le Goff has demonstrated.[100] Le Goff argues that in antiquity the meaning of bodily metaphors was based on a system of head/intestines/limbs, while Christianity enforced the dualism of head and heart, thereby excluding intestines and limbs as seats of life force, which became located exclusively in the heart. This change in the representation of the self was not a radical break but rather, it seems, a slow transformation and gradual alteration of the moral meanings carried by particular organs.[101] During the medieval period, the heart alone of all the inner organs became the seat of the qualities of life force, while the liver and other intestines were attributed only negative aspects such as certain immoral passions.[102]

Popular body concepts in early modern Sweden resemble many of the features that Le Goff attributed to the 'pagan' world view. The most striking similarity lies in the notions of the embodied vital life force and of the inner organs as the seat of intellectual capacity and emotion.[103] Swedish spells that addressed inner organs acknowledged that these were seats 'of a person's vital life force', or self. Thus, social meaning was produced in binding the lungs, livers, and tongues of rivals and enemies. Metaphorically, the victim was deprived of life force, power of speech, and social influence. This corresponds with the intent of magical practice to manipulate interpersonal relations in order to influence the power of a rival. The following ritual for winning one's case in court was recorded in Uppland in 1646:

> I tie their teeth
> I tie their liver
> I tie their lungs
> I tie their tongues
> I tie them with snake sting
> and snake nap

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[100] Le Goff, "Head or Heart?" 13.

[101] Le Goff states that "Pagan beliefs remained in force, but their meaning was modified through a shift in emphasis, through the substitution of certain values for others, and through the devaluation or the valorization of commonly used metaphors"; ibid., 14.

[102] Ibid., 16.

[103] Le Goff points out that in the New Testament the heart is not only the "seat of vital forces", but is also a metaphor for affection and interiority; ibid., 16.

Mine forward and theirs backwards
In the name of all those seven thousand [devils].

The accused read this three times and blew into salt three times every time the prayer was said. The accused then put some of the salt in his or her shoes and spread some in front of the door of the courtroom where the trial was to be held before anybody went inside.[104]

Here, the body was part of social rivalry and conflict in the court. This magic explicitly addressed body parts in order to manipulate a socially dangerous situation between two parties. By weakening the opponent, either the accused or the accuser's own social standing in the court could be manipulated. Such "word in front of the court against damage of one's own perjury", was recorded in 1682.

I tie sticks and walls,
hearts and kidneys,
livers and lungs.
These all shall be silent
and I shall talk.
In the name of all thousand devils' name.[105]

These oral traditions relating to body parts reveal the existence of complex symbolic systems in early modern Europe. They echo the findings of Barbara Duden, who has shown us how in eighteenth-century Germany, women's perceptions of their bodies stemmed from a different tradition to that of the doctor's more learned or scholarly view and, consequently, are best analyzed in the context of folk beliefs.[106] It seems that the Swedish court cases reveal a similar independent oral tradition of assigning social meaning to body parts.

The skin as visible divider between the body surface and the body inside was, not surprisingly, an organ much affected by magic. The affliction of a rash, for example, signified social tensions and disorder. This is in accordance with some anthropological studies which link moral tensions with diseases of the skin.[107] Some female healers admitted that their patients consulted them about skin rashes. In 1723, the healer Maria Mansdotter admitted to the court that she had cured "those

[104] Uppland, Järlåsa, 1646 UDKA, J II:1 in Uppsala Lansarkivet, quoted in E. Linderholm, *Svenska signelser och besvärjelser från medeltid och nytid*, 166.
[105] 1682, Stockholm, HRT, quoted in Linderholm, *Svenska signelser och besvärjelser fran medeltid och nytid*, p. 166, n. 329.
[106] Duden, *The Woman Beneath the Skin*, 35.
[107] Strathern, "Why is Shame on the Skin?"

who have a rash on their body, earache or toothache, small children, or women's complaints" with natural means such as herbs and roots which were dried and cooked with beer.[108]

In most folklore discussions on body and magic, a body part which figures prominently is the caul, an amniotic sack that covers the face of a 'lucky person' at birth.[109] There is abundant evidence in Swedish folklore archives that the caul was associated with the magical ability of an individual. The caul bestowed 'magical' power upon its owner by birthright; this power of the self and power to dominate others would be realized in winning court proceedings and generally having 'luck' in life. The caul enabled the owner to transcend the boundaries of the visible world and have access to the invisible and mythical part of life. People born with the caul were able to hear birds speaking and to see 'the flame' and Jack-o'-lantern (*lyktgubbar*).[110] The notion of transcendence is strongest in the motif of soul journeys, which are semantically closely tied to the caul. The Swedish word for caul, *segerhuva*, is closely related to the word *hinna*, which translates as membrane, cuticle, pellicle, or coat. This suggests an association with the magical coat that makes one invisible and allows access to the other world.

In court records of the Appellate Court of Göta, the caul appears only in connection with a soul journey and there is only one surviving example, which dates from 1679 and was recorded in the city of Ronneby, in Blekinge in the south of Sweden:

> In the name of Jesus Christ I write:
> Today I line my right foot
> with a caul (*segerhufwe*)
> with a steel foot
> and with eagle power.
>
> The saying I shall have,
> The saying I shall speak,
> And speaking shall I in my cloth
> and on my ways.[111]

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[108] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1723, Skåne hundred of Frosta, (Arens 3:3).

[109] Compare also the function of the caul in Friuli discussed in Ginzburg, *The Nightbattles*, 15.

[110] Jochum Stattin, "Tro och vetande om skånska väsen," in Jochum Stattin, ed., *Folktro i Skåne*, 80.

[111] Linderholm, *Svenska signelser och besvärjelser fran medeltid och nytid*, 170. Compare RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1679, county of Blekinge, city of Ronneby, cases Bengta Bengtsdotter (Arens 2:5).

This example links very nicely the magical abilities of a person, here bestowed by the caul, and personal power.

A similar notion of power being linked to an individual can be observed in an examination of hair, which was another body part used in Swedish magic.[112] In 1707, Staffan Ohlson Boedkare reported to the court of the city of Ystad that on a Thursday in April of the previous year, Johanna Hansdotter came to his house three times, demanding a particular leather band, but did not receive it. On the following Friday morning, Staffan found in an apple tree in his garden a knot as big as a walnut, which he took down. The knot contained hair, nails, and ash, and was black on the outside. Staffan counteracted its supposed magical content by making the sign of a cross with a needle over it and by burning the knot. This incident was repeated one year later, when, again on a Thursday, Johanna Hansdotter came to his place asking for the leather band, which she was again denied. On the following morning, he found a similar knot in the tree, which, once again, he burned. He suspected Johanna of placing the knots, and was "of the opinion that he had since this time no sale of beer for which she was responsible".[113]

This story provides a good basis for a discussion of the connection between moral tensions and hair. If hair was found somewhere on a person's clothing or within their farmstead, they had to be careful. If the hair was bound in a *trollknot*, one could be almost certain that there was harmful intent behind it and that misfortune could be expected.[114] The victim would quickly employ causal logic to make links between the use of hair, harmful intent, and misfortune. In the case of Staffan, discussed above, the accused Johanna Hansdotter had employed magical

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[112] Hair cuttings of the sick person were needed for counter magical healing rituals. RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1762–1763, Småland, county of Kalmar, case vs Stina Ericsdotter Deboi.

[113] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1707, Skåne, county of Malmöhus, city of Ystad, case vs Johanna Hansdotter (Arens 2:30). Both the sign of the cross and metal (needle, knife) were devices of counter-magic. See also a case of making the sign of the cross with a knife over a cow: RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1728, Skåne, county Malmöhus, hundred of Luggude, case vs Karna Persdotter (Arens 3:5). Bringéus reports how in the nineteenth-century Scanian cheese moulds still had the sign of the cross carved into them as protection against evil; Bringéus, "Folkliga föreställningar kring fodan," 125.

[114] Compare also the study by David Gentilcore on popular religion in early modern Terra d'Otranto, where in 1678 the episcopal court was confronted with the same evidence: "They returned proclaiming the discovery of several hairs, which they told de Adamo were part of the maleficent charm causing her son's illness"; Gentilcore, *From Bishop to Witch*, 128.

techniques to correct social relations; she had tried to manipulate, with the help of hair, Staffan's persona or vital life force. The misfortune in his case had not been a loss in personal health or livestock, but a stagnation of his business. This too was part of 'a person's vital life force' as it included not just the individual, but also the well-being of his household in the widest sense—its farm, animals, and business. Staffan came to the court to reverse this power relation between Johanna Hansdotter and himself, arguing that the causal link between his misfortune and the finding of a *trollknot* was the ill-wisher, Johanna. Staffan's refusal to sell her the desired strap must have been still vital in his memory. As she was rather insistent, coming three times on one day to ask for it, we can assume that she left very angrily. The tension between the two was expressed in this magical object, which she placed with a curse in his garden.

The magical manipulation of hair was also seen as the cause of the death of livestock as the following example illustrates. The case was heard on 27 October 1772 in the court district of Östra Göinge.[115] Earlier that month, the local priest had written to the bailiff complaining about magical activities in his parish:

> Some weeks ago the peasant Måns Swensson and his wife Pärnilla Månsdotter came to me and told me how their maid Lusse Knutsdotter had admitted voluntarily to them that she, on advice of her stepmother Karna Swänsdotter, had harmed her master's cows and livestock with the help of forbidden arts. The court asked the girl with the presence of the household of her master if she admits this and she answered yes. This girl has not been to the Holy Communion, but has knowledge of Christianity, therefore I reminded her several times to say the truth and not out of sinful intention to lie about herself or her stepmother, but she stayed with the given confession.[116]

The harming ritual which she, and later also her stepmother, performed was to cut hair from the livestock and make a knot (*klut*) with some white powder in it, then give it to the animals with the following words: "I lay this down in the name of *Fan*, you shall eat this in the name of *Fan*, and die in the name of *Fan*".[117] This statement constitutes an implicit

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[115] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 4, 1772, Skåne, county of Kristianstad, hundred of Östra Göinge, case Måns Swensson and Pärnilla Månsdotter vs Lusse Knutsdotter (Arens 5:6).

[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid.

accusation on the part of the girl against her stepmother. Whether it was true or not, the evocation of the Devil (*Fan*) probably seemed to the girl to be a convincing image for the court. However, the real test was that the animals concerned—three calves, two sheep, and one horse—had died suddenly. Other farmers testified that this could have not been caused by bad fodder since "Måns Swensson had enough hay and straw". Hair was in this case actively employed in harmful magic. It passed through the permeable borders of Måns Swensson's household to the house of Karna Swänsdotter where it was imbued in a ritual way with harmful power and returned to Måns' barn to harm his livestock.

In summary, not only were body boundaries osmotic, but body parts and bodily fluids were potent even when detached from the body. These qualities enabled an interconnection between self and community which in its physical exchange was taken as a sign of magical manipulation. Powerful emotions could alter bodily fluids, thus regulating the self, and indeed the self-identity of others. The relation between self and community was embedded in the relation between all households. Any transgression of household borders was potentially dangerous and the bodily sickening of household members and their animals signified social tensions and harmful transgression. Socially ambiguous persons, such as servants, who entered a household only temporarily, were the first to be suspected of harm and accused of witchcraft. Spitting, bleeding, urinating, or sweating were bodily aspects which were potentially significant and could be incorporated into the causality of magic. Body parts such as hair, tongue, or liver constituted signs of the self and were metonyms for personal power in folk beliefs.

Conclusion

In the eighteenth century, the body was not restricted to its physicality as in our modern medical understanding, but instead represented the broader social self. I have argued that this understanding of the somatic provides us with a new perspective on witchcraft and magical practices. In early modern Sweden, the body was the vehicle of magic in two ways: passively, because a body (human or animal) could passively display signs of magic directed against it in the form of certain illnesses; and actively because body parts and fluids were actively used to transmit the magical power of the owner. Signs of the body were

read very carefully and if magic was discussed, as in our trials, bodily evidence was carefully provided and considered. Conditions of the body such as sleep or illness, and bodily elements such as hair were important components of magical acts practised by both women and men. These visible signs of illness were displayed in the disease and death of the wronged party. Victims demanded the discovery of the hidden cause of the misfortune by interpreting the signs and context, and the restoration of health through counter-magic.

This social identity of the body encompassed the complete household including children, servants, and animals. As this chapter has demonstrated, the household was the most important social unit in rural and urban Sweden. Household borders (for example, the door threshold) marked the division between the inside and outside worlds. The households were hierarchical and servants were used by their mistresses to enter other households in preparation for magical deeds, for instance to collect hair or urine or to hide knots in houses or barns. But contracts with servants were renewed or ended in autumn and their loyalty could easily be transferred. Servants could therefore gain intimate knowledge of several farms while their loyalty was still with their families of origin. To farm owners they presented an ambiguous element, were not trusted, and were often accused of spreading gossip and rumour.

Farm animals were also a social category and formed part of this social body of the household. Thus, attacks on animals constituted not only significant economic losses, particularly in the case of cows and horses, but were also seen as a personal humiliation and insult to the owner. The farmer and his wife identified strongly with their animals. If witchcraft was suspected, it was perceived as a direct insult to the owner and had to be investigated. However, the way in which owners identified with their animals involved clear gender divisions. Women identified with cows and performed protection rituals on their behalf; they were also the object of suspicion when cows were harmed, while on the other hand, men were seen as responsible for harm inflicted upon horses.

The interconnection between individual and society has been described by scholars using the metaphor of osmosis. Such conditional permeability reflects the social foundation of bodies and bodily exchange because the flow of fluids and of magical power was not dangerous in relations which were clearly defined and understood. But in highly competitive or uncertain relations, bodily intrusion was feared. Such situations could occur when social obligations between households were

not met, for example in cases of delayed payments or the cancellation of marriage promises. In the context of Swedish witchcraft, envy was widely perceived as an emotion which could inflict direct harm. It represented a competitive relationship which rendered bodily borders ambiguous and vulnerable. The exchange between bodies was therefore socially regulated.

In this chapter, I have argued that all body fluids were suitable for use in magical practices. Not only was blood used to sign contracts with the Devil, but menstrual blood was said to be used by women to manipulate men to marry them. However the use of fluids was not restricted to women. Men, too, could use urine to transfer illness, while sweat and saliva could similarly be used for healing. The discussion of women's milk magic highlighted a number of gender-related concerns regarding magic and the representation of the body. After discussing the interconnectedness between body and self, individual and community, we need now to address how illness was corrected. Healing as a form of counter-magic employed the same ideas of body and self as *maleficium*, and because of its importance in early modern Swedish witchcraft cases, will be discussed separately in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

HEALING AS COUNTER-MAGIC

Healing as a form of counter-magic constituted a significant part of all magical activities in eighteenth-century Sweden. Curative magic was enacted to counter illnesses caused by humans with magical activities or by supernatural beings like trolls and water-spirits. In this respect, Sweden was not an exceptional cultural community. The understanding of magical healing as a form of counter-magic is also evident in other parts of Europe.[1] Historians have stressed that illness was an expression of the interrupted link between the sacred and the social. Therefore, those who had access to the sacred, such as the clergy, saints, and even wise women, could be healing agents. Furthermore, the Swedish cases demonstrate that witchcraft and healing were intertwined. Christina Larner has come to similar conclusions for early modern Scotland.[2] In popular belief, certain illnesses were regarded as the result of witchcraft, and healing would take on the form of counter-magic. In this chapter, I redress the research tradition which distinguishes between magical rituals and religious beliefs, proposing instead a more inclusive conceptualization of magic, popular religion, and healing as expressing a fundamental syncretism rooted in the same theory of causality.[3]

Counter-magical healing was deeply syncretistic in nature, combining Christian mythology and ritual with older beliefs in trolls and elves.[4]

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[1] For Italy, Peter Burke argued that rites of healing expressed the cultural communication between the individual and the supernatural; Burke, *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy*, 208; Similarly, David Gentilcore's study of the Italian region of Terra d'Otranto viewed magical healing rituals as expressions of people's relations to the sacred; Gentilcore, *From Bishop to Witch*.

[2] See Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion*, especially Chapter 4: "Official and Unofficial Healing," 141–52.

[3] I refer here to Hastrup's discussion of witchcraft and healing in early modern Iceland; Hastrup, "The Power of Knowledge." For England, see the work of Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam Madness* and R. C. Sawyer, "'Strangely Handled in all Lyms'."

[4] For a discussion of charms as an integral part of popular Christianity, see David Elton Gay, "On the Christianity of Incantations." Similarly, Ruth Martin's fine discussion of healing magic in early modern Venice emphasized how popular healing rituals contained many Christian elements; Martin, *Witchcraft and Inquisition in Venice 1550–1650*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell 1989.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the popular social practice of visiting spiritual places and healing wells to perform rituals did not diminish, despite Enlightenment rhetoric about the natural causes of diseases. The nature of magical healing practices demonstrate that belief in the efficacy of Catholic saints and sacraments continued at least at a popular level long after the Reformation. The pantheon of the sacred who were approached for the purpose of magical healing charms included not only Jesus, but also key Catholic figures such as the Virgin Mary, St. Peter, and St Olof. This syncretism is especially surprising in a Protestant country like Sweden, where no official Catholic alternative discourse for spiritual healing in the form of pilgrimages or healing miracles existed.[5] Likewise, trolls and water spirits were held responsible for certain illness and protection rituals and charms were enacted to protect the health of humans and farm animals. The adjectives used in narratives of magic to describe victims of sorcery clearly imply the involvement of a supernatural agency; especially of trolls (*bortrollad*) taking victims to the mountains they were believed to inhabit (*bergtagen*).

Other forms of healing also drew upon spiritual causalities. Spiritual healing was debated in Pietist and Herrnhut communities in Sweden, although its wider influence was minimal.[6] Similarly, Mesmerism's influence on new understandings of magnetic healing remained restricted to Swedenborg and his small circle of followers after the 1780s.[7] These emerging forms of spiritual healing competed with the counter magic which was widely employed within popular practices.

In eighteenth-century Sweden, counter-magical healing was performed on the assumption of an interconnected mind and body, with rituals being employed to reverse the somatic state of sickness. These curative acts functioned as metaphors for correcting the social tensions

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[5] David Lederer has discussed the significance of the Counter Reformation for the renewed promotion of shrines, saints' healing, and exorcism in Bavaria during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; Lederer, *Madness, Religion and the State in Early Modern Europe*.

[6] Although the case of Catharina Fagenberg in the early eighteenth century was interpreted by various contemporary observers as a case of witchcraft as well as a case of pious Pietist healing, this remained an exception; see Edsman, *A Swedish Folk Healer*. For a general discussion of Pietism and Herrnhutism in Sweden, compare Pleijel, *Herrnhutism in Sydsverige*. For a modern cultural analysis of the Herrnhut movement in Stockholm, see Arne Jarrick, *Den himmelske älskaren.*

[7] For a discussion of Mesmerism in Sweden, see Karin Johannisson, *Magnetisörernas tid*.

that had caused the illness, and for re-establishing order. Again, the body acted as a visible stage for invisible spiritual power. The magical cause of illness—that is, the belief that illness was caused by people or spirits employing supernatural means—is reflected in the semantic expressions which were used in the trials to describe a person suffering from illness that required supernatural healing rituals. The state of the bewitched person or animal was described by verbs which reflected the magical nature of the underlying activities.[8] These verbs included *förgöra* (to destroy), *förtrolla* (bewitch, cast a spell on). The victims were described as *modstolen* and *maktstolen*, both words which refer to the deprivation of one's life force and personal power. Acts of magical healing were described in the sources with the verb *signa* (to bless).

Healing rites, as already discussed, were forms of counter-magic aiming at the restoration of order in a metaphysical as well as a social sense. Given the specific understanding of world order that prevailed at the time and its manifestation in visible signs, the work of restoration was directed primarily at the macrocosm: driving away the illness, praying away the devil. As a result, the disturbed body as a visible sign was normalized: the pain left, the person recovered life force or, as the case may be, the cow gave milk again and the disorder was reversed. Through such interventions, the body would be cured, with the person recovering full health as well as full social position in the Christian community. To achieve its aim of restoring spiritual and physical order, the counter-magical act of healing involved rituals as well as charms.[9]

An analysis of magical healing as conducted in eighteenth-century Sweden raises the question of whether it was a social phenomenon or merely the response to medical conditions of the time. Demographic studies of early modern Sweden enable a comparison to be made of illnesses treated with magic, as evident in the case study trials presented here, with detailed descriptions of epidemics occurring in the same period and the medically supplied reasons for mortality.[10] Imhof found that diseases such as malaria,[11] whooping cough, and dysentery

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[8] In Swedish, these adjectives are *modstolen* (depleted of inner strength or life force), *maktstolen* (depleted of inner strength or power), *borttagen* (spirited away), *miölkat* (milked), *förgiordt* (cursed), and *förtrollad* (bewitched).

[9] Klaniczay has argued this for Hungarian cases of witchcraft and miracle healing; G. Klaniczay, "The Structure of Narratives on Misfortune and Healing."

[10] Imhof, *Aspekte der Bevölkerungsentwicklung*.

[11] Explicitly named in some cases as healing for *Frossan (Frås san)*, see ibid. on malaria, esp. 613ff.

accounted for high mortality rates, including, it must be noted, a particularly high child mortality rate (for the age group 1–10 years).[12] This figure helps explain the high incidence in court records of reported attempts by mothers to seek help from wise people to heal their children. Notwithstanding this, the rituals described in court records do not exactly match the Swedish morbidity profile. For example, while the rituals catered to anxieties about children with malarial symptoms, they do not seem to have been used explicitly against whooping cough and dysentery. Healing magic seems to have been employed to counter the large range of illnesses which were not readily identifiable to early modern medicine. This is made quite clear in the sources, where healers and patients describe the use of rituals and charms for more general conditions of 'fading away', 'losing one's power', or suffering from lameness. In the knowledge regime of the eighteenth century, the wasting illness—loss of control of the legs and loss of one's strength and life force—reflected a loss of the power of the self, caused by witchcraft. Healing rituals addressed all forms of illness as the result of spiritual disorder, rather than as specific medical ailments that needed to be classified empirically as bronchitis, malaria, or dysentery, for example.

How widespread was magical healing in eighteenth-century Sweden? Between 1634 and 1754, of the 880 individuals accused, 502 people were accused of non-harmful magic (*vidskepelse*), with the majority of these cases concerning healing.[13] This is a substantial proportion of the cases heard. As discussed in Chapter One, the rise of cases of non-malevolent magic heard at the courts was related to the change of the law in 1734 and to a fundamental change in the nature of local courts. The eighteenth century saw an increase in cases of non-harmful magic brought to the court by local priests, while cases of *maleficium* brought by private people remained constant. Because of the increase in the number of cases concerning magical healing, the number of men who were accused of magic also increased. Österberg has argued that during the eighteenth century, the nature of the court

[12] For instance, for the hundreds of Oxie, Torna, Frosta, Lister, and Bräkne, Medelstad in southern Sweden Imhof found that the mortality rate in the category "unknown childhood diseases" was the single highest rate of 21% of all death cases for the period 1749–1772. It has to be remembered that other categories such as whooping cough, malaria, and bronchitis also are likely to have included children; Imhof and Lindskog, "Die Todesursachen in Schweden und Finnland 1749–1773," statistics on p. 115.

[13] Sörlin, *Trolldoms- och vidskepelsprocesserna*, 35.

changed in Sweden. Whereas in the past it had been a public space to negotiate interpersonal conflicts such as theft, murder, and maleficent magic, it now became increasingly an instrument of the state which focused on cracking down on behaviour that questioned the power of authorities. Seen in this light, the persecution of magical healing rituals was premised on their being 'superstition' which competed with the authority of local pastors, who now tightened up their social control over the spiritual lives of their parishioners by bringing healers to the court. Rather than constituting a change in popular magical practices, this demonstrates a shift in focus on the part of the authorities to non-harmful magic or 'superstition', and this is reflected in the changed nature of our sources.

The clergy's concern about widespread magical healing is clearly expressed in the Episcopal visitations in Sweden. In 1795, a visitation circular issued by Bishop Peter Munck to the parishes of the episcopate of Lund registered the following responses by rural deans on the question of superstition in their parishes.[14] Dean Carl Cullberg, from the hundred of Frosta, reported that "Superstitions have become less compared with previous times. If they are persistent then it is in the field of healing the sick." He mentioned that God's name was often misused in such healings when otherwise "good and honest means" were employed. Also, Dean Thuro Liebman, from the hundred of Albo, reported that the superstitions he had noticed concentrated on the healing of the sick. Common rituals were the blessing in the name of the Holy Trinity and the practice of drawing the sign of the cross over the door on Maundy Thursday. His remark that "The most well-known superstition at this place is how St Olof's hatchet is used" is interesting because it attests to the fact that Catholic saints like St Olof were still part of the representation of the supernatural in a Lutheran country. The persistence of other Catholic trends, such as the worship of Mary, will be demonstrated later. Dean Jakob Qviding, from the hundred of Oxie, had heard stories about healing serious illnesses and cramps by praying in nine churches but in his opinion "people do not value this so much".[15] Dean Olof Bergklint, from the hundred of Järrestad, remarked frankly: "Superstition is something which one does

[14] Bringéus, "Uppteckningar om vidskepelse i Lunds stift 1795."
[15] Ibid., 88.

not like to admit to the priest". Still, he found out about pilgrimages to St Olof's church, during which pilgrims stroked themselves with the picture of St Olof's hatchet. He also mentioned rituals involving lead from the church window, baptismal water, and even the host, if people could access them, but he admitted at the same time that "about this he cannot say anything with certainty". He was more certain about the treatment of the sick. Dean Simon Niclas Tengwall, from the same hundred of Järrestad, wrote "that superstition and *signeri* [blessings] have not been extinct yet" and he too could confirm that St Olof was still an important figure in popular culture because "the day of St Olof is celebrated with a service and markets where wine, brandy and food is sold".[16]

A further consistent point raised by the deans is the continued importance of local healers (*kloka*) to their communities. The clergy acknowledged that illness in humans and animals continued to be associated with witchcraft and social conflict and therefore people sought the help of local healers. The change we see is not in popular belief, but in learned discourse. The learned discourse of the eighteenth century equated local healers not with the alleged reality of the Devil, but with the illusionary nature of 'superstition'. People with magical powers were not cast as demon lovers, but as frauds and cheats who exploited the ignorance of common folk. Dean Joseph Norén, from the hundred of Gärds, pointed out:

> Superstitions are to the greatest part expelled by the Enlightenment. Yet some remnants still exist and these are, [firstly], to go and ask a so-called wise person (*kloka*) if one has lost something of one's property through theft, or if one has a wasting illness in animals or man. Witchcraft is imagined to show in some illness. Very secret enmity between the neighbours stems from this.[17]

And Dean W. M. Gyllenskepp, hundred of Östra, noted:

> Superstitions are to the greatest part outlawed, with the exception that maybe the one or the other sneaks to the so-called *kloka* to ask for healing of himself or his creatures.[18]

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[16] Ibid., 91.
[17] Ibid., 93.
[18] Ibid., 94.

Dean Simon Trägårdh, Östra hundred, reported:

> No superstitions have been found amongst the peasants except in the desire to attribute all ill-health in their household, they act foolishly by asking the so-called *kloka* to heal them or their animals from the evil.[19]

Dean Jöns Bernhard Santesson, Mörrum, Listers hundred, responded as follows:

> The darkness of superstition has disappeared because of the increase of the light of knowledge. Previously one had offered, on the altar of so-called *kloka* here in the village, to heal illness of people and animals. And such *kloka* are sought-after sometimes in Skåne, sometimes in Småland. But none of these frauds are known to me to live in this county and seldom is such absurd business punished nowadays.[20]

These replies are characterized by three main points: firstly, the observers' emphasis on the benign rather than malign magic; secondly, the distancing of the priest from such practices and their rejection of the causality underlying such alleged healings; and thirdly, the concepts of Enlightenment and superstition.

Whether the deans' descriptions were their true impressions or whether they were polished answers submitted to a superior is not known. After all, these answers were official replies to the Bishop and it is not unlikely that priests formulated their reply to conform to perceived viewpoints of the official church. The admission of widespread non-Christian practices could call into question the priest's ability to look after his parishioners. Clearly, the discourse of the Enlightenment was available to Protestant ministers.[21] In contrast to sixteenth-century Protestant pastors who, as Robert Scribner has shown,[22] maintained close cultural links with their parishioners, Swedish clergy of the eighteenth century seemed to have been distancing themselves from popular magical views. Interestingly, the interconnectedness of self and community is expressed in one priest's observation that social tensions caused illness of the body and of animals and that this 'secret enmity' pointed to the forbidden feelings underlying witchcraft. From this perspective, witchcraft attacked not only bodies and animals but whole households,

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[19] Ibid., 94.
[20] Ibid., 95.
[21] For a discussion of the Swedish Enlightenment view on popular magic see Oja, "The Superstitious Other."
[22] R. W. Scribner, "Cosmic Order and Daily Life."

affirming the idea of an extended self that was a target of witchcraft. To reverse the state of sickness, counter-magic must be used. Hence, people looked to the *kloka* for help.

As it was the priest's responsibility to discover and punish blasphemy, tension resulted between the villagers and the priest, as indicated by some of the pastors' replies quoted above. By 1795, however, the legal control on healing had eased; witchcraft was no longer a capital crime and healers were more likely to be denounced as cheats, quacks, or charlatans. Although increasing numbers of cases of magical healing came before the courts, the priests were mild in their condemnations, regarding magical healing as something destined soon to disappear forever. This change of attitude was partially due to the increasing influence of Enlightenment philosophies on the parts of the clergy. However, the Enlightenment did not actually replace existing magical world views, but instead brought about a gradual change in the meanings of metaphors employed in magical healing. One of Sweden's best known and most influential Enlightenment scholars was Carl Linneaus, whose ideas on magic are worth examining in this context.

In Linneaus' opinion, beliefs in fairies, spirits of the wood, and goblins stemmed from a fear of darkness which was fostered in the imagination.[23] To him, the onset of a nightmare had natural explanations. He did not believe in knockings as death omens, regarded possession by the Devil as an illness, and deemed belief in witches to be an *inflammatio cerebri*.[24] Yet, while preferring natural causes as an explanation for some phenomena of Swedish folklore, Linneaus also accepted a degree of magical causality and, hence, his understanding remained partly rooted in popular beliefs. Linneaus' concept of magical medicine was threefold: firstly, the use of bodily excretion and secretion for goals outside their natural purpose; secondly, the ability to achieve an effect remotely through deliberate human actions; and thirdly, control over the magnetic power of animal bodies.[25] Although Linneaus generally represents a Cartesian view, in some respects he retained theological notions of the role of nature in his belief that the healing power

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[23] Arvid H. Uggla, ed., *Caroli Linnaei Diaeta naturalis 1733*; A. O. Lindfors, ed., *Linnés dietetik på grundvalen af dels hans eget originalutkast till föreläsingar*.

[24] Lindfors, *Lachesis naturalis*, 115.

[25] Wikman comments that Linneaus cured his sick sister at Christmas 1731 by laying her in a newly slaughtered sheep's body; Wikman, "Medical Magic in Linneaus' Dietetics," 185.

of plants stemmed from their divine origin.[26] To Linneaus, healing had its root in an interconnected micro- and macrocosmos. Thus, Linneaus adhered at least partially to the traditional world view that acknowledged an interconnectedness between the visible and invisible world as manifested in intentions and in magical acts or in the divine and healing power of plants. While he advocated Enlightenment ideas about maintaining health and longevity, emphasizing, for example, the importance of diet and the positive effects of beer, his view on healing still incorporated pre-Enlightenment views of healing as a practice embedded within the wider spiritual cosmos.

Healing Rituals and Charms

In order to elucidate the cultural meanings of early modern magical healing in Sweden, I will now discuss the nature and structure of charms and associated rituals as they were described in witchcraft trials, using Jonathan Roper's definition of charms as "the verbal element of vernacular magic practice".[27] Charms had various purposes: they could be protective (of children, crops, and livestock; and from diseases, witchcraft and enemies), curative (love charms, for use in court), or malefic (to bring illness upon an enemy, to destroy love, bring marital discord, harm crops or cattle, and so on).[28] Charms were always enacted as part of a performance in the form of a healing ritual.

Rituals are generally discussed within scholarly literature in relation to the perception of a sacred purpose and universal order.[29] Since magical healing targeted the invisible causes of illness associated with the macrocosm, the various forms of healing, rituals, and charms also addressed this hidden and mythical world. Healing rituals in Sweden were comprised of gestures (for example striking, blowing away, binding, blessing, making the sign of the cross, smoking out, burying a pot at the crossroads, burying a magical knot or bottle under the door, stroking with a hand over the back of an animal), along with written and spoken charms. How can these healing rituals be analyzed? Were healing rituals so important because they relieved psychological

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Jonathan Roper, introduction to *Charms and Charming in Europe*, 1.

[28] Compare for this classification of Russian charms, W. F. Ryan, "Eclecticism in the Russian Charm Tradition," especially 116.

[29] See Scribner, "Cosmic Order and Daily Life."

tensions through their dramatic effect or did they express a much wider cultural meaning?

Historians have sometimes downplayed the cultural meaning of healing rituals and charms and attributed the healer's success purely to the psychological effect of ritual performance. Keith Thomas argued that the healing success of wise people was grounded in the psychological power rituals held for "the lower sections of the seventeenth century population", comparing them with "some primitive peoples today",[30] and noting that "They cherish the dramatic side of magical healing, the ritual acting out of sickness, and the symbolic treatment of the disease in its social context".[31] Thomas, in further argument, limits his discussion of the symbolic value and its social meaning to a consideration of the royal touch, the healing of scrofula. Although Thomas acknowledges the power of the ritual, he explains it on the basis that rituals relieved psychological tensions and therefore 'healed' illnesses that were not real, in that they were not organic but rather imagined states.[32]

In contrast, I would argue that the examples of magical healing suggest that psychosomatic illnesses with their perceived spiritual causes were very real for early modern people. Magical healing charms and rituals reveal key cultural meanings of early modern societies. Healing rituals enacted particular mythologies, which, in the cases considered here, are contained in the healing charms. These healing activities demonstrate the early modern notions of selfhood and body, as discussed in the previous chapters, in very specific ways. Magical healing rituals presumed that the state of the body expressed an underlying condition of the self-wasting illness, for example, was a sign that the power of self had been taken away. This inner self was interconnected also with the macrocosm, or spiritual realm. In healing rituals and charms, this realm was approached for healing purposes. Healing demonstrates the syncretism of popular religion, which fused Christian elements such as

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[30] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 245.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., 243: "But many of the associated conditions [of scrofula] may well have been hysterical in origin and hence open to the possibility of spectacular cure. The uplifting effects of the religious ceremony, the nervous excitement felt in the presence of the King, upon whom they had perhaps never previously set eyes, the washing of their limbs by the surgeons before they were admitted to the royal presence—all these factors, acting individually or in combination, may well have been sufficient to effect the cure upon those sufferers whose condition did not spring from any real organic disorder."

salt, the sign of the cross, the paternoster, and charms involving saints as well as non-Christian elements such as elves, trolls, and water spirits.

An example of this is observed in the 1722 case in which a healer evoked both Jesus and the Virgin Mary in the recitation of a charm she admitting having used to heal both people and livestock against Finn-shot.[33] Against illness in pigs she used the following words:

> Virgin Mary asked Jesus Christ, her blessed son, for some advice: "A serious illness has come to the country." So answered Jesus himself his blessed mother: "Take malt and salt and use it against the illness." In the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit's name. Amen.[34]

At the same session, the healer also explained that a disease called *blodoxel* is caught if someone steps over the place where an animal has been slaughtered without a knife having been stuck in the earth as protection against trolls. Because of this oversight, if a troll were to sit down there, a person who stepped over this spot would catch the disease.[35]

As Peter Burke has demonstrated, early modern illnesses were often perceived to have been caused by spirits, and magical healing rituals enabled the individual to access this spiritual realm in order to regain their health.[36] Rituals of healing were employed to undo this bewitchment. For the Swedish context, the rituals of binding (*binda*) and the blessing (*signe*) are relevant in that they are the most commonly used forms of rituals and charms to appear in the records of the Appellate Court of Göta and I will analyze these in detail later in the discussion. Before doing so, however, it is necessary to situate these ritual techniques in the wider context of ritualized times and spaces in which they took place.

It was understood that healing rituals needed to be performed at specified places and times. In a Småland trial, several witnesses emphasized that the accused woman healers were visited by many people on

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[33] RA, GHA, HRT, vol. 1, 1722, county of Älvsborg, hundred of Ale, case vs Borta Andersdotter (Arens 3:4).

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Burke, *Historical Anthropology*, 211–19. Burke also notes that, "As illnesses ceased to be perceived in terms of possession by spirits or devils, healing ceased to be a form of communication. However, the new attitudes affected only a minority of Italians." (219).

holy days.[37] On such days, people flocked to their house to be helped, and the area in front of their house was "like a market". A witness who lived just up the road from the accused women remarked that "about thirty people had come into the witness's house to ask where the wise women (*kloka*) live". Thursday was most commonly the day when rituals were performed. A healer had asked to be given pieces of clothing of the sick which she kept "over three Thursdays" and then sent back to be tied around the patient. Maundy Thursdays were regarded as especially potent days for magic. In 1757, Anders Carlsson admitted that he had harrowed his fields on a Maunday Thursday before sunrise so to have fewer thistles and more wheat in summer.[38] Sundays were also popular times for healing. One woman was advised by the wise woman to "fetch water on a Sunday morning before sunrise and use this to wash her [sick] husband".[39] Other preferred times included Walpurgis, Easter, Christmas, and Midsummer Day. Ewa Swensdotter admitted to the court that she had helped Sara from Ling by carrying out a blood-letting on her on Midsummer Day.[40] In another case, a farmer's wife went on Easter morning to the crib and let their cows lick salt in order to protect them from sickness.[41]

Churches or churchyards were popular locations for healing rituals in early modern Sweden and elsewhere in Europe. A church cure is reported, for example, from Faurås hundred in 1742 on a Thursday, when a lay healer cured three children—Thomas, Margareta, and Ingeborg—of rachitis (*horskrifwer*), a sickness thought to be caused by whores.[42] A prayer cited in 1748 as intended for the healing of animals

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[37] Note that only one witness, the lieutenant, used the secular form for holidays (*Högtids dagarna*), while all other witnesses referred to it as saints' feast days (*Helgdagarne*), which has a much stronger religious connotation. RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1756, county of Jönköpping, hundred of Vista. Case vs widow Brita Månsdotter and her daughter Maria Jönsdotter.

[38] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, Skåne, county of Kristianstad, case vs Anders Carlsson (Arens 4:3).

[39] Both examples in RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1756, county of Jönköpping, hundred of Vista, case vs widow Brita Månsdotter and her daughter Maria Jönsdotter. Thursday is also mentioned as the preferred day to enact magical healings for early modern Venice; Ruth Martin, *Witchcraft and Inquisition in Venice 1550–1650*, 136–37.

[40] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1757, county of Jönköpping, hundred of Östra, case vs soldier's wife Ewa Swensdotter.

[41] This case from 1639 is mentioned in John Gardberg, "Rättskipning, övertro och själavård i västra Nyland fore 1734 års lag," in *Budkavlen*, 1958, 61–62.

[42] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1742, Halland county, hundred of Faurås, case vs Ingeborg Swensdotter, Ingier Andersdotter, Bengta Håjansdotter (Arens 3:21).

began with the line "Virgin Maria's son sat down on Virgin Mary's churchyard",[43] and in 1706 a female healer acknowledged that the use of soil from the church wall in Kabusa was very effective in healing rituals.[44]

Likewise, wells such as St Olof's were popular healing places, as reported in sources ranging from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries.[45] In Västergötland in 1671, numerous people came to the well of St Ingemo on Maundy Sunday, St John's Day, or other specified days in order to heal themselves and their horses.[46] As noted earlier, a woman in Småland was advised by a healer to fetch water from a sacrifice well on a Sunday morning before sunrise and to wash her sick husband therewith to bring about his recovery.[47] In another example, in 1802 a French traveler named de La Tocnay observed the same practices at a well close to Uppsala where peasants came to say prayers and to use the water for healing.[48] Sacrifice wells or other specific places were frequently mentioned in visitation protocols. Healing rituals were performed at specific places and times, and the corresponding healing charms likewise reveal mythic associations in their narrative structures.

Healing charms were mostly narrative incantations that interpenetrated realistic and mythical levels.[49] In practice, the healer or a supernatural agent, such as St Peter, Christ, or Mary, encountered the evil spirit, called it by its name and exiled it to a distant place such as "under an earthbound stone". Alternatively, the healer invoked a condition impossible to meet: "You shall never do him more harm than a

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[43] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1748, county of Älvsborg, hundred of Vedbo, priest Nils Sörström vs boy Johan Swensson (Arens 3:1).

[44] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1706, Skåne, county of Kristianstad, Ingelstad, case vs Hanna Isaacksdotter.

[45] G. Granberg, *Svenska folket genom tiderna*, 121–22. Henning Olsson also discusses how St Olof's wells were well-known as healing places in eighteenth-century Sweden. He has analyzed eighteenth-century maps of Skåne and a description of the hundred of Luggude by Simon Petrus Sundius in 1754 which includes descriptions of healing rituals linked to St Olof's wells; Olsson, "Offerkällor i Kyllabygden." Similarly, the use of holy wells for healing in post-Reformation Scotland is discussed in Joyce Miller, "Devices and Directions," on wells specifically on p. 100.

[46] G. Granberg, *Svenska folket*, 122.

[47] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1756, Småland, county of Jönköpping, hundred of Vista, case vs widow Brita Månsdotter and her daughter Maria Jönsdotter.

[48] Quoted in Granberg, *Svenska folket*, vol. 4, 122.

[49] E. Bozoky, "Mythic Mediation in Healing Incantations."

mouse can do to an earthbound stone".[50] Myth and reality were thus interlinked in narrative charms.[51] The patient to be healed was named as the victim to be protected by mythical figures and thus became part of the mythic world. It was, indeed, the mythical perspective which enabled the successful cure.[52] It has been suggested that the relationship between the reality of illness and its healing in the mythical world was not simply one of analogy but one of correspondence.[53]

The charms used Christian symbols, such as the paternoster or the cross, in conjunction with pre-Christian symbols. In popular use, religion and magic were not perceived as dichotomies and priests were obviously aware that many healing rituals involved Christian symbols—most commonly, the name of Jesus, the sign of the cross, or the host. People approached the priest to bless amulets as protection against sickness. As noted earlier, healing rites also took place in the church, with lead from the church windows used in the invocation. This ambivalence is particularly evident in the concept of blessing, which will be discussed below.[54]

Blessing (signa)

Another important semantic concept in Swedish magical healing was *signa*, to bless. From this verb derives the title for a wise woman—*signerska*. Blessings, like rituals, enacted in metonymical form the interconnection between the self and the universe. In a social environment where personal contacts generated order or chaos, words were perceived as having a physical power that could be used to harm or to heal; in this way, blessings were thought to be capable of healing or harming animals and humans. For most people in the eighteenth century, these powerful words did not run counter to Christian piety. Just as pastors were asked to bless women forty days after childbirth, or even after miscarriages, to ensure the health of woman and child, lay healers

[50] RA, GHA, HRT, vol. 1, 1722, county of Älvsborg, hundred of Ale, case vs Borta Andersdotter.

[51] For English examples of narrative charms see Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 212.

[52] Bozoky, "Mythic Mediation," 88.

[53] Ibid., 89.

[54] For a detailed discussion of the magical potency of Christian symbols and objects, including the priest's garb, see Martin, *Witchcraft and the Inquisition in Venice*, 92ff.

administered their own blessings.[55] Charms spoken by wise people in order to heal were called *signebön*, or blessing prayer—powerful words which were, in this context, interchangeable with Christian blessings. There was no heresy in believing that Christ could help to defeat a witch, that a healer could assume Christ's role in this process, or even that a patient was representative of St Peter, whose horse's broken leg was cured. Furthermore, domestic animals, such as cows, could also meet Christ or the Virgin Mary and ask for help to have their life force and health returned.

As observed above, words carried power but their intentions could be ambivalent; they could constitute blessings or curses (*signa/förgöring*),[56] affecting both animals and humans alike. The positive or negative meaning of the blessing was assigned according to the intentions underlying them. In popular discourse, the meaning of powerful words was inherently ambivalent, and a blessing could also be interpreted as a curse. In Christian discourse, on the other hand, there was no such ambivalence; a clear understanding existed of the proper and improper use of words. The decisive criterion for the proper use of powerful words lay not in the intention of the speaker, as in popular discourse, but resided in the approved authority. Following this logic, Christian signs used by lay people for healing were as much a blasphemy as the call of the devil in *maleficium*. Assize courts were very concerned with blasphemy and therefore investigated all cases that came before them, whether healing or harming, to ascertain whether Christian signs had been abused. Thus, in 1752, in the city of Simrishamn, the priest accused a merchant, Wollin, of causing the letters "I.N.R.I." to be written on his two gates and on the doors of a shoemaker and some others.[57] Blasphemy, then, was an issue of whose authority was at work. While in popular discourse authority lay with the healer, in Christian understanding the use of particular Christian words invoked a separate and ultimate power. The access to this power, and the permission to use these words, was restricted to the clergy.

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[55] For a discussion of these churching rites after women suffered miscarriages in early modern Sweden see Bringéus, "Animism in Gammalrödja."

[56] On the ambiguity of words in healing cures see also Orobitg, "Between Evil and Malady," esp. 186–88.

[57] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 4, 1752, Skåne, county of Kristianstad, city of Simrishamn, case vs Cajsa Docken, maid Margaretha, and the wife of Olof Odberg (Arens 3:49).

In early modern Europe, magical words represented material acts: the transfer of illness by a magician could be described in terms of 'putting on' or 'taking off', expressions which evoke the magical logic of the physical power of words to symbolize actions.[58] At the same time, as mentioned earlier, priests were asked by people to bless amulets as protection.[59] The spiritual authorities able to exercise this power of intervention were interchangeable: the Lord, St Peter, the pastor, or the performing healer.

On his journeys through Sweden, Linneaus recorded various folk customs. In his travel book *Ölands och Gotlandsresan*, for instance, he recorded a healing charm from the province of Småland. This narrative, which he learned from a wise woman called Ingeborg, from Mjärhult, does not differ from those recorded at the local courts which are discussed in the next section. The patient in this story complained about persistent bleeding from the nose and a feeling of being bruised in the body. People called this *gastakrystad*[60] and Ingeborg used the following charm for healing it:

> Our Lord and Saint Peter,
> they went along on their way,
> There they met a dead man.
> So said our Lord and Saint Peter
> to the dead man
> Where are you going?
> The dead said:
> I shall go to N.N., [the name of the patient]
> What shall you do there?
> So asked our Lord and Saint Peter.
> I shall strain him
> so that his heart blood will decay.
> No! That shall I prohibit you.
> I shall put you under stock and stone
> so that you shall do no harm to anybody.[61]

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[58] Larner, *Enemies of God*, 146.

[59] LLA, 1712, Skåne, county of Malmöhus, hundred of Luggude, case vs Ellna Persdotter.

[60] The Swedish *gasta* means spirit of the dead.

[61] Wikman, "Carl von Linnés samling av småländska vidskepelser 1741," quote on p. 17. Wikman discusses here how the original diaries and the published versions differ. Nevertheless, for our purpose both versions show similar findings concerning healing rites.

This charm in the form of an encounter narrative[62] is one of numerous examples quoted in the records of the Appeal Court of Göta. The counter-magical act could also be seen as a form of exorcism: the personified pain is banned and driven away, literally to nowhere. The power to exercise this power lies with a spiritual authority, in this case Christ and St Peter.

Charms could be narratives that reported a meeting between the healer and the personified pain, which was conceptualized as a sending of spirits or ill-wishing people. These narratives have metonymical meaning, connecting healer, patient, and the macrocosm.[63] Typical in its structure, the following charm is one of several examples quoted in various cases in the Göta Appeal Court. This one is cited from 1722, in the province of Västergötland:

> Nåsse and Tåsse went along their way, when they met Jesus Christ himself, Where are you going asked Jesus Christ himself, So they said: I shall go till N:N: [here the sick person is named] I shall tear his flesh, suck his blood, and break his leg. "No", answered Jesus Christ himself, "I shall not allow this. You shall not tear his flesh, nor suck his blood or break his leg, you shall never do him more harm than a mouse can do to an earthbound stone". In the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen. After repeating it three times one says a Lord's Prayer.[64]

As with rituals, charms invoked a fusion of mythical and earthly time, and of mythical and earthly place. In the charms quoted earlier in this chapter, no distinction was made between the mythical past, when Jesus and St Peter went for a walk, the accident and subsequent cure they experienced and the situation of the patient in the present. The patient would be healed as St Peter was. The healer was able to ward off the personified pain in the same way that the Virgin Mary or the Lord were able to. At this mythical place and time, a moral authority (the

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[62] Encounter charms were also known in other European cultures. For a discussion of French examples see Owen Davies, "French Charmers and Their Healing Charms," 104–05.

[63] For an extensive analysis of the genre of Swedish charms, see Klintberg, *Svenska trollformler*. An interesting discussion of the similar narrative structure of *maleficium* stories and of healing miracles has been presented by Gabor Klaniczay, "The Structure of Narratives on Misfortune and Healing."

[64] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1722, county of Älvsborg, hundred of Ahle, case vs Borta Andersdotter (Arens 3:4). Also printed in Kvideland and Sehmsdorf, eds., *Scandinavian Folk Belief*, 139. The counterspell takes the form of a meeting between Christ and the demons, see Tillhagen, *Folklig läkekonst*, 277–79. Printed in Linderholm, *Signelser och besvärjelser*, 863; reprinted in Klintberg, *Svenska trollformler*, 68.

reciting healer or Christ, Mary, or St Peter) commanded the personified pain (*Qwesa*) to spare the proposed victim, and to take refuge at a nowhere place (earthbound stone, the river where nobody rows). These recreations of mythical narratives represent in an impressive way the interconnectedness of self and the universe. They demonstrated how a reverse of the somatic state (illness) could only be achieved if the cosmic sphere was included.[65] Klintberg observes that the charms against illness (*onda bettet, Qwesa*) were also used against envy.[66] This further supports the conceptualization of pain and illness as being physical effects of the power of another person's inner intentions.

Such emotional tensions could often express themselves in pain in the limbs.[67] In the eighteenth century, complaints about painful knees and hands must have been frequent, indeed, since many recorded charms in Swedish manuscripts refer to them. In 1753 at the assizes of the hundred of Bållebygd in the county of Älvsborg, a healing charm for the foot was cited:

> I went along my way when I met the evil one. I asked where he was going and he said: "I shall go to Börge Swensson, tear his flesh and break his leg. Whereupon I answered: No, that shall you not [do], but instead you shall go on the path that leads to nowhere, you shall go to the forest where nobody lives and you shall go on the water where nothing rows. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit".[68]

Another example was reported in 1716, from Värmland. Maria Hindricksdotter, who had been accused of illegal healing, admitted to using the following words to heal pain in the limbs:

> Our Lord Jesus Christ and Virgin Mary went on their way when they met *Qwesa*. When Jesus asked, "Where are you going?" *Qwesa* answered, "I am going to the village where the man or the woman live." "What will you do there?" asked Jesus. "Devour flesh and gnaw bones", said the evil [pain]. "No", said Jesus, you shall go away under an earthbound stone and fishless water which is neither fished nor rowed".[69]

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[65] Klintberg classified these epic charms as a type of meeting or type of wandering; the meeting of the healer and the illness evolves in a question-answer narrative. Klintberg, *Svenska trollformler*, 45.

[66] Ibid., 46.

[67] Jackson, "Thinking Through the Body."

[68] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1753, county of Älvsborg, hundred of Bållebygd, Lars Holmsted vs Kierstin Persdotter (Arens 3:53).

[69] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1716, county of Värmland, hundred of Jösse, bailiff Olof Ekelund vs Maria Hindricksdotter (Arens 2:37).

Maria added that after reciting this charm she also said the Lord's Prayer. She admitted to in this way having helped people who had pain in their hands and feet, and that as payment, she would accept only some food or tobacco. Maria was questioned on her Christian knowledge, which was found to be very good. Her father had a reputation for being able to administer blessings and so did her brother.

In the city of Malmö in 1746, Karna Jönsdotter was questioned about her abilities as a healer and asked if she used any *signeri*.[70] She replied that she had not used any *signeri* for sixteen years. Admitting to past practice, Karna described what she used to do if somebody suffered from pain in the knee:

> If somebody had pain in the knee, tied three straws around the injury and spoke the following words: "Saint Pär [St Peter] and our Lord they went for a walk down a path, when Pär's horse broke [its leg]. And our Lord stepped down from his horse and blessed it with straw".[71]

In summary, evidence exists of words having direct power to effect physical change, in the context of both curses as well as blessings. The word *signa* was used equally in Swedish records to signify either Christian rituals such as a priest's blessing, blessings of the Lord, Jesus, or the saints, or the charms spoken by wise people. This equivalence is not only evident in the shared use of the semantic expression, *signa*, but also in the recitation of the same narrative structures for church blessings and magical charms.[72] Healing relied on these blessings, which acted as metaphors to re-create the link between the individual and the cosmos in the same way that rituals did. The charms expressed a ritual communication with the supernatural. In fact, in practice, there seems to have existed little distinction between them. Both charms and rituals were powerful enough to physically reverse the somatic state of sickness. Given the general belief that Christian authorities as well as spirits belonged to the moral universe that was invoked in blessings, it is difficult to see how popular culture would draw a clear distinction between the 'religious' and the 'magical'.

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[70] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1746, Skåne, Malmohus county, Onsjo hundred, priest vs Karna Jönsdotter (Arens 3:35).

[71] Ibid.

[72] For Swedish church blessings see Linderholm, *Signelser och besvärjelser*, nos. 1–78.

Binding (binda)

With its capacity to be used in either a positive or negative way, binding represented the ambivalence of magical rituals. Binding rituals were used for protection (to ward off evil influence)[73] or with harmful intent (binding an organ of the enemy).[74] Binding exemplified the main features of healing rituals in early modern Sweden: firstly, it restored moral order as expressed in the physical cure of the body; secondly, it reinforced and utilized the link between the inner self and the macrocosm; and, thirdly, its meaning was ambiguous and depended on the intent of the performer. Also closely associated with the ritual of binding was the object of the magical knot (*knuta, trollknuta*), which was generally regarded as the precursor to illness or some other misfortune, for it was by the tying of a magical knot that the flow of life force in the victim was interrupted.

Binding was a key concept of Swedish magic and examples of healing by binding are numerous in the records of medieval and early modern Sweden.[75] In 1732, in the hundred of Frosta, Karna Lassesdotter admitted to having cured a sixteen-year-old maid, Hanna Ohlsdotter, of a stomach pain she was suffering, by tying a girdle around her.[76] Binding expressed the interconnectedness of the visible and invisible worlds, enabling its performer to gain power over everything that was associated with this invisible macrocosm—the inner self or life force of people, spirits,[77]

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[73] Tillhagen confirms for the Swedish folklore material of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that to bind (*knuta bort*) was a healing ritual, or symbolic action, to stop the illness from spreading. Tillhagen, *Folklig läkekonst*, 118–20.

[74] See Kvideland and Sehmsdorf, eds., *Scandinavian Folk Belief*, 140–41. Binding is synonymous with exorcism. St John could bind the "nine brothers" who personified fever.

[75] Kvideland and Sehmsdorf, eds., *Scandinavian Folk Belief*, translate *binda* into binding. For folklore legends mentioning the use of the binding ritual as protection of cattle see 232–33, and for binding horses see 189.

[76] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1732, Skåne, county of Malmöhus, hundred of Frosta, priest Anders Textorius vs Karna Lassesdotter (Arens 3:13).

[77] Lindow argues that to bind the *sjörå* (spirit of the water) was exercised before going swimming or fishing, with the intention to hold the spirit back, to prevent its attack. In this story from Vårmland, the spirit would try to trick the fisherman with several visions, with the help of consecrated earth or metal; Lindow, *Swedish Legends and Folktales*, 128–30. Water spirits are referred to in a court case in 1728 when a farmer's wife defended herself for having performed a ritual to protect a cow against the *Bäckaman* (Scanian term for water spirit): RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1728, Skåne, Malmöhus, hundred of Luggude, case vs Ellna Hansdotter.

the dead,[78] thieves,[79] and inner organs.[80] For example, in the trial against Ellna Hansdotter in the hundred of Luggude in 1726, as discussed in Chapter Three, the priest reported that Ellna had once admitted to him her knowledge of how to bind the water spirit, in a charm designed to protect cows. As the first witness called to give evidence, forty-eight-year-old Ellna Persdotter, from the neighbouring village of Lundom, admitted that she had given her husband's trousers to Ellna Hansdotter so that she might heal a sick cow by binding the illness.[81] Ellna Persdotter stated that some years ago she had been unwell and suspected Ellna Hansdotter to be the cause. At the same time, they had lost all their cattle and had become very poor. She suspected Ellna Hansdotter in particular of being responsible for this disaster since she had once found under their basin a magical knot made of her husband's trousers, which she previously had given to Ellna, and in which there was some hair of cows and of humans, nails, horse hair, as well as big salt pieces all around. She threw this into the fire whereupon it exploded as if one had shot a pistol. The woman explained that these trousers had been given the previous day to the accused Ellna Hansdotter for use in a healing ritual, to be tied around the neck of their sick cow so that she would get better again. Ellna Hansdotter, on the other hand, claimed that she did not remember if she had ever received those pieces of trousers or not, although she did finally admit knowing that tying a trouser leg around the neck of the cow would help against the *Bäckamannen* [water spirit] and prevent it from attacking the cow.[82]

The level of alarm demonstrated by the farmer's wife when she found this knot under the crib of her cow house stemmed from the commonly held belief that knots were very dangerous. People were extremely cautious in handling them once they were discovered.[83] If burned, knots would make a frightening noise as if a pistol were being fired. The

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[78] Apart from water spirits, the dead had to be bound. See Kvideland and Sehmsdorf, eds., *Scandinavian Folk Belief*, 101–03. Here "to bind" is again to be understood in the figurative sense: to keep them in the grave, to keep them away, to drive them off—to deprive the dead of their power.

[79] Ibid., 148. To force the thief to return the goods or to scratch out his eye to gain power over him. These are examples of gaining power over the inhabitants of the invisible side of reality.

[80] Linderholm, *Signelser och besvärjelser*, 166, 169.

[81] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1728, Skåne, Malmöhus, hundred of Luggude, case vs Ellna Hansdotter.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid.

binding ritual tied together or constrained the life force of the addressed creature (human, animal, or spirit), depriving it of power.[84] This was evident in the victim's slow but continuing fading away ('like a shadow') or, in the case of a cow, a drying-up of milk. In 1688, a young boy who had picked up a magical knot a woman had cast into the churchyard was struck down by severe illness.[85] In 1727, it was reported from Skåne that Arena Lassessdotter had not had a single healthy day since she had moved with her husband to their house. But once a magical knot (*trollknuta*) had been dug out from under the floor of her bedroom and been burnt, she became well.[86] Magical knots were often made from a piece of cloth, and in the aforementioned case it was claimed that one had been made from the scarf a woman had just worn to church. It has been argued that this knot was "a bag made from a child's or a foal's caul".[87] In the manuscripts of the Appellate Court of Göta, I did not encounter any reference to the caul in relation to magical knots, although magical knots themselves are mentioned very frequently.

As a symbol of intended misfortune, magical knots were always perceived with suspicion and fear, particularly if they had been hidden secretly under a door or crib. One such case in 1758, in Malmöhus county, hundred of Torna, involved Elin Fränberg, who is reported to have earned her living by wandering across the country offering her services as a wise woman to peasants.[88] In court, she was accused of using blessings (*signeri*), divination, (*spådom*) and fraud (*bedrägeri*). The witness Lars Jönsson reported that Elin had come to him with the prediction that his cow would die in twelve days' time because it had been bewitched (*förgiordt*) by Bengta, the wife of Bengt Lundström. If Lars would give her money, Elin Fränberg could promise to heal the cow. On giving his consent, Lars said, Elin performed a 'smoking out' of the crib of the cow. Then she took the knots she had found under

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[84] Compare also Klintberg, *Svenska trollformler*, 74–75.

[85] See John Gardberg, "Rättskipning," 62–64.

[86] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1727, Skåne, county of Kristianstad, hundred of Gärds, case vs Märta Bengtsdottter. More of these knots were found in the barns of other people, and Märta Bengtsdotter, who had discovered them, was accused of having hidden them there in the first place. For accusations involving magical knots, see also RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1706, Skåne, county of Malmöhus, city of Ystad, case vs Hanna Isaacksdotter (Arens 2:27); RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1756, Småland, Vista hundred, case vs Britta Månsdotter and Maria Jönsdotter.

[87] Kvideland and Sehmsdorf, eds., *Scandinavian Folk Belief*, 168.

[88] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 4, 1758, Skåne, county of Malmöhus, hundred of Torna, case vs Elin Fränberg (Arens 4:7).

the crib and burnt them. Lars Jönsson believed that these were the knots with which the cow had been bewitched. He gave Elin two silver coins and the cow did not fall sick.

Magical knots could cause harm in that they deprived the subject, be it animal or human, of his or her life force. Any such spiritual attack was, at the same time, physically manifest in that the victim would fade away and not thrive. This link to the inner self was symbolically expressed by tying the victim's hair, nails, or clothing in a knot.

Animal Healing and the Gender Division of Magic

The bewitchment of farm animals, predominantly horses and cows, was, in most cases reported to the court, thought to be caused by social tensions between the owner of the animal and the purported witch.[89] It was believed that the only way the animal could be healed was by counter-magic, and as with humans in such circumstances, this counter-magic was performed by knowledgeable people. The rituals were in many aspects similar to those employed in the healing of humans: blessings, touch by hand, smoking out, and magical knots. The records of the consistory in Lund, for example, reveal that the healing ritual of smoking out sick farm animals was so widespread in the eighteenth century that the local clergy were alarmed at its popularity and urged the consistory to send a circular regarding this matter to be publicly read out in all churches.[90] These smoking rituals were also documented for other parts of Sweden, and in some cases it was reported that wood splinters from church doors were used in this 'sacred fire'.[91]

The predominance of cows and horses among animals affected by harmful magic is significant. As pointed out earlier, these animals were a symbolic extension of their male and female owners. Thus, the illness of farm animals was a visible expression of an invisible conflict between the owner of the animal and the witch. Such conflicts were gendered, as was the healing of farm animals. The dairy was the exclusive area of women and closely bound to a housewife's honour; thus, women were held responsible for any harm to the cows and had to carry out

[89] Most comprehensive on this subject is the article by Ågren, "Maktstulen häst och modstulen ko."
[90] Nils Keyland, "Primitiva eldgöringsmetoder i Sverige."
[91] Ibid.

the healing.[92] Men, on the other hand, were seen as capable of harming and healing oxen and horses, the latter representing the honour and status, as well as the potency, of a man.

The rituals in which Ellna Hansdotter was caught in the act were those of taking blood from the back of the cow in order to feed it to her on some bread, and feeding her malt and salt (sometimes rubbing it into the teeth). She insisted that these were protection rites, but at the court she was accused of having employed these rituals to divest the cows of strength.[93] There are other records of eighteenth-century examples of how to treat animals that are *modstulen* which do not, in principle, differ from rituals described in court records of that time.[94] Linneaus also observed the healing rite of giving a cow some of her own blood on bread, reporting this in his journey through western Götaland in 1747.[95] The act of curing either by making the suspected witch bleed or by feeding the sick animal its own blood on bread or hay shows that body fluids were the carrier of this power over the life force.[96]

It is not surprising that in this gendered context of women healing cows, the relevant charms often invoked the Virgin Mary, the principal female Christian figure. The following charm describes a cow meeting the mythical figure, as the sickness personifications do in other examples. Maidservant Carin Nilsdotter from Utterby admitted her knowledge of the charm which was used to heal cows, but denied that she had also taught the boy Olof Jönsson how to harm horses.

> The Virgin Mary went out to a stream, there she saw where the cow was. "What gives you rise to anger, my cow", she said. "They bend me", said the cow. "I shall cure you", she [Mary] said, "and you shall go home in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit".[97]

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[92] Ibid.; Sommerstad, "Gendering Work, Interpreting Gender"; and Oja, "Kvinnligt, manligt, magiskt."

[93] Ågren, "Maktstulen häst," 56.

[94] Ibid., 58. Please note that spelling of the word varies in the manuscripts.

[95] Ibid., 59.

[96] Ibid., 51.

[97] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1741, county of Värmland, hundred of Fryksdal, case vs Olof Jönsson (Arens 3, 20). The same boy also wrongly accused Jöns Persson, a known healer, of teaching him how to harm horses.

Similarly, a boy called Anders Andersson had heard a prayer to be used for healing animals beginning with the line "Virgin Mary took her well-blessed keys", but could not remember the rest of it when questioned by the court in 1748.[98]

Another significant feature of magic used on animals as well as on humans was its ambivalence—it could be used to either heal or harm. In 1748, in a letter to the court, a priest brought a charge of witchcraft against a fourteen-year-old boy, Johan Swensson, who had apparently admitted at the village assembly his knowledge of witchcraft and healing.[99] It was reported that the boy had told of a way he knew how to harm (*modstiäla*) animals as well as a means to cure them. To steal the power from animals, he was understood to have said:

> I shall pray, and this shall happen, you shall lose your strength [*ditt mod*] on this day out of one, two and three names.

And to cure animals that were suffering as a result of bewitchment (*modstulna*) he would recite the following:

> I sat on and rode to a bridge, there stood so many without strength [*omodige*]. Why do you stand here without strength [*omodig*]?
> I may well stay without strength as strength [*mod*] and essence are out of my body, and the mark is out of my limbs.
> I shall heal you in the three names of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.[100]

Later in the trial, the boy's father, Swen Andersson, admitted to healing animals with the following incantation: "You have lost strength and essence but I shall heal you". The boy insisted to the court, however, that he had never used God's name in this connection. He also denied knowing how to bewitch horses. As this story shows, the spiritual influence on the body could work in opposite ways: to cause harm and make the body sick or to heal a sick body. Both uses of this spiritual power could be administered by the same person, thus disproving the notion that healer and witch were diametrically opposed figures.

In this context, it is interesting to note that the adjective used to describe an animal harmed by magic was *modstolna*. This metonym

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[98] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1748, county of Älvsborg, hundred of Vedbo, priest Nils Sörström vs boy Johan Swensson (Arens 3:1).

[99] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1748, county of Älvsborg, hundred of Vedbo, priest Nils Sörström vs boy Johan Swensson (Arens 3:1).

[100] Ibid.

deserves some more attention. The first part, *mod*, can be translated as mood or inner strength, in the context of magical harming and healing it refers to the inner life force that represents health. When this life force was diminished, it resulted in illness which could only be cured through supernatural intervention by a healer. The second part of the word, *stolna*, means 'stolen' or unlawfully taken away, and implies supernatural agency. *Modstolna* describes the power relationship between the agent that caused the sickness and the person who is suffering from it as one of thief and victim. It indicates an unlawful interference. The adjectives *modstolen and maktstolen* were synonymous in Hälsingland with *skämd* (insulted), *bergtagen* (spirited into the mountain), *förgjord* (cursed), and *trollad* (bewitched). In the western parts of Sweden, *bortstolen* (stolen away) was used, while in Skåne the term used was *borttrollad* (witched away).[101] The relationship between the honour of the owner and the inflicting of illness on the owner's animals can also be traced semantically, as there is evidence that *modstolen* also meant impotency in men.[102]

These conflicts between men were played out in very specific social circumstances. Conflicts between farmers and soldiers, the latter of whom had the standing of crofters in Swedish villages, were often expressed in horse magic. A number of the following cases underline the tenuous position of soldiers which, like that of maids, was somewhat liminal and ambiguous in early modern Sweden. Österberg has estimated that around ten per cent of all adult men received their wages from the military during the later part of the early modern period.[103] Soldiers were tenement (soldier belonging to the Swedish military tenure establishment) and were closely linked to the rural society. Living as a crofter on a holding on an estate or farm, the Swedish soldier's military service was only part-time during peace periods. His status as a crofter positioned the soldier towards the lower social strata in the village. The existence of a military tax for farmers might have increased tensions between farmers and soldiers.

At the same time, knowledge of magic rituals to protect and heal horses and oxen was also seen to be predominantly associated with

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[101] Compare Ågren, "Maktstulen häst," 54.

[102] Ågren, "Maktstulen häst," 56, mentions a case recorded in 1593 in Stockholm's tänkeböcker where a woman had to stand trial for magical healing of an impotent (*modstolne*) man.

[103] Behre, Larsson, and Österberg. *Sveriges historia 1521–1809*, 203.

members of the army, although not exclusively. In an incident in 1757, the peasant Olof accused the soldier Johan Bråtenberg of being responsible for the sickness of two of his horses which had suddenly ceased 'to thrive' (*trefna*). Olof held that Johan Bråtenberg was responsible because of a quarrel over Olof's refusal to allow Johan to graze his animals on one of his meadows. Johan had been heard to curse Olof with the following words: "Much have I caused him and better shall this not become unless he begs me [for forgiveness]. This is the just punishment for driving off my cows from the meadow."[104]

This conflict between farmer and soldier highlights the social distinction between the farmer, who owns the meadows, and the soldier who has to ask the farmer's permission to let his cow graze there. But the accused soldier Johan Bråtenberg denied to the court any such magical knowledge, as shown in the following account:

> Bråtenberg who will be forty-one at Easter, small in stature and a little stout, but with healthy limbs, stayed behind closed doors until he was to be questioned. He insistently denied everything which had been bought against him by reasoning that he never knew some art of harming horses, and even less that he had such like done. And if he had once in company reported something about it or said that he could harm horses, so must that have been because of drunkenness and foolhardiness, but he cannot do any of this.[105]

This example demonstrates that any magic relating to horses, be it malevolent or benevolent, was practised by men.[106] The following example from Värmland in 1741 provides further support for this view. Jöns Persson was accused of using several healing rites, which he applied to humans and animals. The initial accusation referred to a ritual he had performed upon horses, causing them harm. He had promised a boy that he would teach him how to take the strength (*modet*) and transfer it to another horse, employing a ritual involving excrement, praying a Lord's Prayer three times backwards, and submitting one's soul and body to the power of the Evil.[107] The same Jöns Persson

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[104] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1757, county of Värmland, hundred of Ölme, peasant Olof Göransson vs soldier Johan Bråtenberg (Arens 4:2).

[105] Ibid. Even after he admitted another incident six years earlier in which he buried a dead cat under the doorstep of Olof's stable in attempt to harm his horses, the court did not find the evidence to be sufficient and Johan Bråtenberg was acquitted.

[106] Ågren, "Maktstulen häst," 48.

[107] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1741, county of Värmland, hundred of Fryksdal, 1741, case vs Olof Jönsson et al. (Arens 3:20).

further admitted during the trial that he was able to heal people from snake bite, and to heal people's feet by praying over them.[108] Another case from Värmland unfolded at the court in 1700:

> Three years ago Oluf Ersson from Skarufstad came to the lieutenant Fredrich Cremer and reported how his horse had been stabbed and asked him if he could come to Skarufstad and find out who had stabbed the horse. This the lieutenant did. But he did not find the slightest trail against somebody who could have done it. But soon after that Jörn Persson cut himself in his leg and arm which happened to him because he had stabbed his [Oluf's] horse.[109]

The above case demonstrates how Jöns Persson was intimated to be the culprit because his body displayed the same wound as had been inflicted on the horse. In magical discourse, the infliction could be sent back to the perpetrator, and witches could be recognized by their displaying the wound they inflicted on their victims. This is supported by Oluf's statement to the court that he "in his despair had wished and said that who had stabbed his horse would receive a stab as big as the one he [his horse] had got".

In a dramatic turn of events, the lieutenant accused Oluf Ersson of being a witch, in response to which Oluf admitted in court that he had cured a horse but claimed to have used only natural means. Later, however, Oluf admitted that he had once attempted to heal a farmer's horse which, as even the jury acknowledged, was bewitched, by taking blood from the mouth of the horse, mixing it with horse's hair and then giving it to the horse to eat.

In order to settle the case, the lieutenant insisted that several men from Skarufstad should testify under oath "what they know about Oluf's witchcraft". The witnesses were divided in their opinions. Some of the men confirmed that Oluf was the cause of the illness and subsequent death of an old woman. They reported that Oluf had met this woman in the forest and that after the meeting she fell ill and became, as she admitted on her death bed, "putrid". Other witnesses testified to Oluf's good reputation, emphasizing "that Oluf is always honest and good" and that they had heard "that Oluf shall use some *löfwerij*, but he himself knows nothing other about Oluf except that he is honest and

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[108] Ibid.

[109] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1700, county of Värmland, hundred of Grums, Lieutnant H. Fredrich Cremer vs Oluf Ersson (Arens 2:20).

good". The accusation was clearly linked to the lieutenant's misgivings about Oluf, as one witness stated clearly. He said "this lieutenant speaks harshly of Oluf and that he must prove Oluf's witchcraft (*trollkonst*) while his wife and maid had been sick six years before". The lieutenant's strategy was unsuccessful as most of the witnesses testified that Oluf Ersson was "honest and good". On these grounds, the court set Oluf free. It is interesting to note that, in this case, no women were asked to give testimony. It seems that the healing or harming of horses was an exclusively male affair. It is also notable that, in this case, a member of the army was involved. The link between male honour and the army was presumably very strong. This is also suggested in the next case, where it was argued that a knight had taught horse magic to a blacksmith.

In 1763, in Skåne in the county of Kristianstad, Anders Lundgren was accused of having given to the blacksmith Nils Larsson a piece of paper containing a spell to cure horses and oxen. He defended himself by saying he had obtained it from a member of the Östergöta Cavalry when this regiment was stationed in Skåne in 1744.[110] He insisted that he had not given this paper, on which a healing ritual was written, to anybody else nor had he received any payment for it. But the vestry-keeper testified that the knight had admitted this deed to the priest, and it was indeed the priest who had written to the bailiff to initiate the trial. The actual purpose of this ritual description was, at least, ambivalent to the priest. Condemning its blasphemous nature—the help of the Devil was invoked—the priest declared further: "Neither could I find out with what intent he had written this derisive and infamous recipe, especially since blacksmith Nils owns neither sick nor healthy horses". In court, Anders Lundgren insisted that he had intended this information only for healing horses and oxen. The knight was found guilty of "attempting to spread superstition" and sentenced to pay a fine of 40 daler silver coins or twelve days' imprisonment with water and bread.

Another case of male involvement in obtaining magical means to heal horses was recorded in Värmland in 1776.[111] The executioner, Lars Hierpe, was found guilty of using the nails that had pierced the

[110] RA, GA, HRT vol. 4, 1763, Skåne, Kristianstad county, bailiff Gabriel Ahnfeldt vs Anders Lundgren (Arens 4:25).

[111] RA, GA, HRT vol. 4, 1776, Värmland, bailiff Lars Jacob de Bough vs executioner Lars Hierpe (Arens 5:12).

head and hand of a thief on his execution by lending them, for payment, to several local men to do "various superstitions". The nature of these superstitions was later specified in the statements of witnesses and the accused, with one man claiming that these nails would be "useful in sickness". This referred not only to human ailments, but also to sick animals—horses in particular—which would recover from magic through rituals involving these nails. The executioner defended himself, saying that Jöns Persson had asked him for such a nail "in order to heal the misfortune which Jöns Persson had with his beasts". Thus, the accused executioner admitted he had taken the nails from the dead body "partly because of Jöns Persson's wish, partly because of the old tale that such nails are useful for the horse-barterer to make the horses more lively".[112]

The cases discussed in this section indicate that healing rituals concerning animals reflected similar ideas about illness causality to those relating to humans. The suffering of animals, as of humans, was interpreted as being caused by supernatural interference which resulted in the abduction of the inner life force (*mod*). The inner life force needed to be returned by magic to effect a cure of the body. The countermagic of healing was ritually enacted by another supernatural agent, very often a saint or the Virgin Mary or Christ. The incantations were metonyms of a dialogue between the suffering animal and the mythical healer, just as they were in healing cases concerning humans.

Farm animals were regarded as part of the household and like most other household contexts, the healing and harming of livestock was a gendered sphere. Women were more frequently accused of healing or harming cows, and female healers admitted to the courts their knowledge of healing cows. Similarly, men were exclusively held responsible for harming the horses of other men. Only men would bring forward accusations of this kind. Male healers admitted to having cured horses. Men also accessed specific male networks to obtain healing paraphernalia for horses by approaching executioners for nails which had been in contact with the bodies of executed criminals.

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[112] Ibid. The dead were very attractive to some men in the hundred of Fryksdal, where several men were accused of having used pieces of a dead man to perform healing magic with horses. Compare also RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, Värmland, Fryksdal hundred, case vs Olof Jönsson (Arens 3:20).

Conclusion

Witchcraft cases brought to the Appellate Court of Göta demonstrate the extent to which magical healing remained a central part of a wider magical belief system in eighteenth-century Sweden despite emerging Enlightenment criticism. As we have seen, the increase in overall witchcraft cases in the eighteenth century was due to the higher proportion of healing cases, while the number of maleficium cases stayed constant. During the eighteenth century, officials were less concerned with harmful magic and instead worried about lay healers' popularity and a widespread continued belief in magical healing. In contrast to the population which sought help from wise women and men to cure illness, the clergy frequently brought these healers to court and charged them with fraud. Depending on their position in the community, in early modern Sweden people with magical abilities were cast as either a witch or a healer.[113] As we have seen in Chapter One on the workings of the court, this ambivalence was actively employed in the narrative strategies of neighbours, pastors, and royal officials.[114]

Healers were mediators between the earthly world and the supernatural realm and could access magical power. Cunning people performed many services for the community: healing, recovering lost or stolen objects, and predicting the future. Healers knew charms and rituals which evoked a supernatural realm, often explicitly Christian. As lay people, they were in direct competition with the Protestant ministers who were supposed to administer blessings. Healers combined the power of the spoken word with the healing touch. The services of women healers were sought by women for women's health issues, but also to heal their children and menfolk.

Early modern magical healing was a pronouncedly gendered sphere. While both men and women used magic for healing, the areas in which they operated reflect an early modern gender hierarchy. Women's healing abilities were often restricted to their domesticated environment, including children, cows, and other women. Men, on the other hand, used magic, both benevolent and malevolent, on horses. The gendering

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[113] The activities of wise men in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are briefly discussed in Pehr Johnsson, "Kloka och naturläkare i Göinge under åldre tider," 90–95.

[114] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1701, county of Bohuslän, hundred of Askim, Zacharias Hermyn vs Maret Andersdotter and Karin Borgersdotter.

of magic was also related to social hierarchies, and differences between married women, unmarried women, and especially maidservants were reflected in social judgments about the authorized or unlawful use of magic.

I have argued that healing magic was part of a wider complex of beliefs regarding magic and witchcraft. Charms and rituals displayed a particular cultural logic and reinforced ideas about the interconnectedness of self and body and the fluid boundaries between humans, animals, and spirits. It was believed, for example, that spiritual beings and humans with magical powers could influence the bodies and minds of people and animals. They could send illness and at the same time were able to remove illness and restore health.

The persistence of magical practices for protection of course raises the question of why this should have been so. My suggestion in this chapter was to consider the underlying early modern assumptions concerning illness and embodiment in order to understand the continuity of magical healing practices. Healing rituals affected the bodies of humans and animals and restored them to health. In doing so, they addressed the spiritual entities held to be responsible for the physical suffering. For example, it was believed that illness could originate from spirits in the forest, water, or under homesteads. Elves and trolls in particular were thought to cause suffering in humans and animals. Likewise, humans who transgressed social spaces and moved to the social outside—the realm of elves and trolls—could cause disease. Thus, witches were the prototype of human transgressors, and witch-shots were metaphors for the physical harm they caused.

In turn, the body could also be utilized in healing rituals as a healing agent. The same body fluids and body parts were employed in healing rituals as in *maleficium*. Similarly, selfhood as inner strength and power was drawn away and diminished in illness, as a semantic perspective on the verbs used to describe the magical infliction of illness has shown. A surprising ambiguity thus arises in magical practices where the same ingredients—the same rituals of stroking, speaking and the same confinements to special places or times—influence the communication with the macrocosm to either malevolent or benevolent purposes. As the cases discussed in this chapter made clear, an important feature of early modern magic was its inherent ambivalence—the belief that people who could heal could also harm. This significant ambiguous nature of popular magical practices will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE AMBIGUITY OF MAGIC

In 1709, when Anna Thoresdotter and her daughter, Kierstin, had to defend themselves against the accusation of theft and the use of superstition, they stated very clearly their ideas about the meaning of their special powers:

> the widow Anna Thoresdotter [said that she] had neither learned nor used any superstitions at any time, but admitted that all she could do was to bless pain (*Signa Wred*) which she does not regard as a damned or sinful, but rather as a useful art, in which she uses the following word or blessing over folk and animals: "Jesus stroked over a joint, so badly did his horse hurt its foot that Jesus dismounted [from the horse]." In this way she blessed the painful (*wredna*) blood in Jesus' blessed name.

This blessing Anna Thoresdotter occasionally used, with success, and she did not believe that she had committed any sin, for good and pious words were used.[1]

In contrast, the local court regarded Anna's magical healing practices as sinful. For her misuse of Jesus' name, her Christian faith was further questioned in subsequent interrogations. To Anna, however, there was no contradiction between her blessing of people and animals, and her Christianity. Instead, she represented herself as being in the succession of Christ, emphasizing repeatedly that Jesus himself, 'when he was in flesh on earth', had used these words.

In the course of Anna Thoresdotter's trial, other witnesses from her local community accused her directly and indirectly of witchcraft. Although nobody interpreted her magical practices as sin or blasphemy, all agreed that it was witchcraft. Thus, Anna's magical abilities were judged in accordance with her low moral standing; she was said to have gained magical abilities through a bad maternal inheritance. As one witness put it: "But that Anna Thoresdotter, likewise originating from a bad root, from her mother and particularly her mother's mother has

[1] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1709, Västergötland, county of Skaraborg, hundred of Kåkind, bailiff vs Anna and Kierstin Thoresdotter.

learnt such art."[2] This biblical metaphor, springing from "a bad root", was used to name the cause of her evil intentions and of her harmful magic. Thus, the Swedish popular world view interconnected the magical inner self with the moral and social outer self; however, the interpretation of this link remained ambiguous.

The case of Anna Thoresdotter, along with many others at the local assize courts in Sweden, presents us with three different meanings of magical power: piety ('pious words'), the sin of blasphemy, and witchcraft. There are essentially three forms of ambiguity which are inherent in early modern magical practice. The first layer of ambiguity concerns the nature of signs. Occurrences such as sudden illness, bleeding butter, or the appearance of a hare could either signify magic or not be significant at all—the illness could be caused by bad weather, the foul-smelling butter made from bad milk, and the hare be simply a hare, rather than a transformed witch. The second level of ambiguity in magic related to the source of this supernatural power. While Christian theology argued that this power could derive only from either God or the Devil and that sorcerers were the agents of the Devil, popular culture located the power of the supernatural not only in a Christian but also in a pre-Christian context. In this view, the locus of magical power could reside in humans independent of the Devil, and also in spirits of the water, the forest, or underneath dwellings. Finally, a third aspect of the ambiguity of magic referred to the intent of the practitioner and the use of magic for harmful or beneficial effect. Magical rituals were conducted for a range of purposes and ultimately there was no absolute control over their effects. Stroking a calf could be meant as a protection against evil spirits or as a harmful touch to bring about sickness. Love magic practiced to win sexual desire or the promise of marriage could instead bring about pain and impotence. All three forms of ambiguity were negotiated, and resolved, in the narratives of sorcery at the local courts and in the final sentence of the court. They were carefully employed by all speakers and shaped their narratives. Plaintiffs, defendants, and witnesses positioned signs of magic strategically in their narratives, offering interpretations of signs and intentions of the suspected sorcerer. Lay people were little concerned with the locus of supernatural power, but the clergy and judges debated whether or not the events described were caused by the Devil.

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[2] Ibid.

The ambiguity of signs, their capacity to represent multiple meanings, was central to popular magic; in fact, both benevolent and malevolent Scandinavian magic drew on the same theory and practice of causality.[3] This brings us to a discussion of the nature of signs in magical narratives: physical signs, such as illness, could either signify a spiritual cause or be natural in origin, the latter meaning they were neither spiritually nor morally significant. The importance of signs in magic did not follow from an absence of a causal structure, but rather from the sign's potential to create meaningful discourse.[4]

Once a sign was accepted as significant, early modern Scandinavian magic still offered multiple interpretations of the cause of magic: the inner self, spirits, God, or the Devil. In this chapter, it is therefore useful to attend to a closer reading of how signs of magic were constructed in narratives presented to the court. In analysing the range of significations of magic in the early modern period I first consider how historical research has thus far dealt with the problem of ambiguity. The subsequent discussion then considers the Swedish material with particular respect to the aspect of the ambiguity of bodily signs, the ambiguity of intentions behind magic, and the treatment of ambiguity at the local courts.

Historical Research on Ambiguity

The French medievalist Jean-Claude Schmitt has emphasized that the main feature of medieval and early modern European popular culture was a "logic of ambivalence",[5] in contrast to theological logic, which presented a definitive meaning. Schmitt discusses the example of the different perceptions of human nature and argues that popular culture allows for an ambivalent conceptualization of human and animal nature, such that it was possible for humans to be transformed into animals, while in the Enlightenment paradigm this possibility lay outside the concept of natural and moral order. Perhaps the reason why historical studies of witchcraft and the history of religion have rarely discussed the ambivalence of magic is that our very research tools, our categories

[3] Hastrup, "The Power of Knowledge."

[4] Philippa Maddern, "Weather, War and Witches." See also the important discussion by Stuart Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, in particular Chapter 18, "The Magical Power of Signs," 281–93.

[5] Jean-Claude Schmitt, "Menschen, Tiere und Dämonen."

of analysis, are constructed in a dichotomous fashion. For instance, the distinction between good and harmful magic, between sorcery and witchcraft, has been adopted by almost all historians working in the field. Historians classified people with supernatural powers either as witches or cunning people.[6] Such dichotomous distinctions between black and white magic prevented a more historical analysis of magic as a complex system of multiple meanings. Taking up Schmitt's suggestion might instead lead us to a deeper understanding of magic, body, and the self in early modern Europe.

When historians did consider the ambivalence of magical acts in European settings, such ambivalence was explained as a conflict between popular and learned culture, and the ambiguous meanings of magic were seen as the result of a long historical process of Christianization.[7] This research has provided us with insightful discussions of the transformation of the 'good witch' of the people into the 'bad witch' of learned culture. This particular historical perspective views magic as a belief system which has been transformed historically, and one in which the multiple meanings of witchcraft reflect particular historical periods, for example the pre-Christian and the Christian era.

Other historians have approached the ambiguity of magic from the perspective of sign and signification. In particular, studies on sainthood and prophecy in medieval and early modern Europe have explored the ambiguity of spiritual signs in the narratives of saints. The Hungarian historian Klaniczay has shown how seeming opposites, the witch and the saint, are in fact not opposites at all, being derived from a single set of presuppositions with regard to human conduct of relationships with the sacred.[8] He has demonstrated that the narrative structures

[6] Keith Thomas draws a distinction between practitioners of magic (cunning men and healers) and practitioners of witchcraft (witches); Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 252–332 and 517–698. William Monter distinguishes between white and black witches; Monter, *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland*, esp. 167–88.

[7] Several historical studies acknowledge the ambiguous nature of magic: Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion*, 151, talks about the "two-edged power" in healing and witchcraft and the ambiguity between good and evil powers. Eva Labouvie, "Hexenspuk und Hexenabwehr," 51, notes for German magic in the early modern period that the ambivalent nature of magic, to be used for good or evil, harbours great power. She links the ambivalence of magic to an ambivalent male perception of women. Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, 167, mentions that both witchcraft beliefs and practices were ambivalent. See also E. Pocs, *Fairies and Witches at the Boundary of South-eastern and Central Europe*, 27, and P. Camporesi, *The Incorruptible Flesh*, 96–97.

[8] Klaniczay, "The Structure of Narratives on Misfortune and Healing."

of medieval *maleficia* and *miracula* (particularly punitive miracles) were almost identical.[9] Illness and pain, for instance, could be caused by a witch or by an angry saint. Similarly, scholars have pointed out that canonization processes reflected a similar ambivalence towards the candidate's spiritual powers. Peter Dinzelbacher explains the ambivalence of saints as being a result of the dualism within Catholic Christianity, that is between God and the Devil, and generally the perceived ambiguity of women throughout the medieval and early modern period.[10] This ambivalence concerning women's behaviour was not restricted to Catholic Europe. In her study on seventeenth-century English Quakers, Phyllis Mack identified a similar ambivalence which was ascribed to female prophets.[11] Mack showed how the ecstatic preaching of female Quakers attracted very different contemporary interpretations, ranging from insanity to witchcraft or prophecy. Ruth Martin, in her study of the mystic Christina von Stommeln, was able to demonstrate that the ambiguity of ecstasy as a sign of spiritual power lay in the fact that the cause could be threefold: the body itself, the Devil, or God.[12]

In Swedish magic, the multivalence of meanings was inherent in all signs. This important feature of early modern magic has so far been insufficiently debated and, most importantly, the question as to why ambiguity was so important has not previously been posed. Therefore I will concentrate on the analysis of the multiple meanings of eighteenth-century Swedish magic and the embeddedness of these popular discourses in the symbolical order of society.

Sign and Causality in Swedish Magic

So far it has been argued that early modern Europeans determined whether signs of the body were either significant or non-significant via the application of three explanations of spiritual signs: nature (non-significant), God, or the Devil. Still, there are some features of the Swedish narratives which are not accounted for in any of these meanings. Why were wise people thought of as people with great knowledge and internal power? Furthermore, as is evident in Swedish sorcery trials,

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[9] Ibid.

[10] Peter Dinzelbacher, *Heilige or Hexen?*, 221. Witches and saints used the same objects for supernatural interventions (e.g. a ring, body parts, body fluids).

[11] Mack, *Visionary Women*, 81.

[12] J. Martin, "Christina von Stommeln."

why was the establishment of the social reputation of the accused so influential in the particular meanings ascribed to magic? The answers lie in the fact that the indigenous Scandinavian theory of magic allowed for a fourth possible cause to account for the manifestation of bodily signs—the power of the inner self which originated from wisdom gained in the mythical outside. The inner self was signified by the emotions, thoughts, and intentions of a person. These, in turn, as manifestations of envy, hate, jealousy, or piety, were seen as causes of magic. Because the inner self was invisible, it was necessary for the magical cause to be apprehended from the visible reflection of the inner self—the person's reputation or bodily appearance. Consequently, narratives entered before the court centred on the reputation of the suspect because the establishment of the characteristics of an outer self suggested the character of the inner self, and thus, implicitly, the cause of magic. As with Anna Thoresdotter, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, and in most other cases, the manuscripts contain conflicting versions of reputations proffered by various parties.

The relation between sign and cause in Scandinavian magic has been discussed by Hastrup, who pointed out that malevolent and benign magic were based on the same theory of causality which was linked to knowledge received from the mythical outside.[13] The ambiguity in regard to the causes of magic differed considerably, depending on whether a case was initiated by peasants or by the authorities. The conflict in peasant accusations of witchcraft was a conflict between households. When peasants initiated an accusation of magic, it concerned only harmful magic, since magical healing and prophecy were not controversial but were accepted forms of magic as they did not present a conflict between households. *Maleficium* was a violation of household boundaries and an intrusion by outsiders, a weakening of the household economy. Thus, outsiders were the suspects, in particular women and children who served on the farm but were not part of the family, and in the eighteenth century an increasing number of soldiers and their families returned from wars, settling as strangers in communities.[14] In cases of malevolent magic, the ambivalence of its meaning had to do with the intent of the suspect.

[13] Hastrup, *Nature and Policy in Iceland*, esp. 210–12.
[14] Behre, Larsson, and Österberg, eds., *Sveriges historia*, 203–04 and 229–31.

On the other hand, cases initiated by priests or bailiffs concerning healing and prophecy displayed an ambivalence that referred to the source of spiritual power, which could lie in either God or the Devil. Here, the conflict centred on the question of authorized access to the sacred. In principle, authorities denied lay people any access to sacred power. Rituals accessing the sacred, like praying (*läsa*) and blessing (*signe*), were ambiguous in the sense that they were used by the clergy and wise people alike. Lay people did not use different semantic expressions. Any attempts to claim spiritual authority were seen as blasphemy and resulted in conflict between laity and clergy. As noted earlier, the increase in cases of sorcery was due to an increase in accusations by the clergy and authorities of non-harmful magic, at a time when the character of the court changed from a stage for conflicts within the village to an instrument of enforcing state control. During the second half of the eighteenth century, the court ceased to reflect interpersonal conflicts within the local communities as it had done in the previous centuries, taking on instead a polarization in the form of state–individual conflict. The changing function of the local assize courts in turn affected the purpose of their narratives and the meaning of signs of magic. As a consequence, ambiguous signs and conflicting meanings necessary for the articulation of tensions within the community were replaced by the discourse of blasphemy and fraud, reflecting social tensions between laity and ecclesiastical and secular authority.

The precise meaning of a sign was decided by positioning it carefully in the structure of each narrative. As Maddern has argued, political narratives in medieval England were implicitly filled with meaning through signs of nature.[15] In early modern Sweden, the sign could be identical with the signified. In narratives of magic presented to the assize courts, signs were of similar importance to those detailed in the chronicles researched by Maddern.[16] The interpretation of signs of magic gave meaning to the world, and each sign had particular functions in the narratives constructed in the courts.[17] As with Maddern's English sources, signs in early modern Sweden allowed for considerable multivalency. The difference between Swedish court records and English vernacular chronicles lies, however, in the fact that signs of magic in

[15] Maddern, "Weather, War and Witches."
[16] Ibid., 77–98.
[17] See Ginzburg, *Clues, Myth and the Historical Method*, 96–125; Davis, *Fiction in the Archives*, 1–6.

Sweden were not restricted to the weather. In the court records, signs were above all displayed in and on a body, whether human or animal. Court records did not mention comets and thunderstorms or the significance of celestial bodies to royal politics. Instead, these local courts were confronted with illness and pain, with the drying-up of milk or with soul journeys, incidents which refer in their meaning to interpersonal relationships within the community and sometimes with the spirits in water, woods, and under the farmstead. Only in cases initiated by the clergy did this meaning concern not interpersonal relationships but the relationship of the accused with God (accusations of blasphemy), as discussed extensively in Chapter Four. As anthropologists have pointed out, the difference between us and eighteenth-century people is not that we do not have meaningful somatic experiences but that we no longer have the words to articulate them, because we deny meaning to the significance of bodily phenomena.[18] It seems to me that in the early modern period the individual had considerable agency and freedom to assign cultural significance and moral meaning to subjective corporeal experiences.

In Sweden, narratives at sorcery trials were filled with implicit meanings through their interweaving of signs of magic, which provided social and moral commentary on the relationships between members of local communities. For this very reason, narratives of sorcery presented to the court were carefully structured and the narrator positioned signs of magic strategically to guide the audience to the desired conclusion. As the story progressed, the meaning of these signs was gradually made clear. The following trial shows how these narratives were structured and how they were implicitly filled with meaning through their use of the signs of magic.

In 1720, the widow Anna Nillsdotter was accused of having used prohibited arts to harm the juror Nills Larson.[19] During her trial, conflicting interpretations of her magical powers were given by the witnesses. Nills Larson had delivered to Anna an order by the court to leave her home, which had been provided by the church. Her late husband had been the organist and the house was now needed so the new organist could move in. The juror was allegedly cursed by Anna because after

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[18] Hastrup and Hervik, eds., *Social Experience and Anthropological Knowledge*; David Leder, *The Absent Body*.

[19] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1719/20, Västergötland, county of Skaraborg, Vartofta hundred, trial vs. Anna Nillsdotter (Arens 2:38).

visiting her, he fell from his horse and broke a leg. Shortly after, Anna Nillsdotter appeared uninvited at his house with an ointment for his pain. After the juror applied the ointment, his pain became intolerable and he "was in pain day and night, finding no peace".[20]

At the beginning of the accuser's narrative the signs of magic—a curse and an ointment—assumed a central significance in relation to the issue of pain. In the juror's narrative, the ointment was a sign of witchcraft and harm, because his pains intensified after applying it. Anna, in her defence, ascribed the opposite meaning to the ointment, indicating that it had once helped her son and she therefore gave it to the juror with the intention of likewise helping him. Here, sign and signifier were represented as one unit, lacking in any deeper spiritual significance. Anna strategically emphasized the non-significant nature of both the sign of the broken leg and the ointment by demanding that certain witnesses "shall be heard to testify about her Christian way of life and that she does not use any witchcraft". She thereby countered the argument of the juror who claimed that his pain was caused by her evil intentions as manifested in the curse.

In the course of questioning other witnesses about the honour and life of the accused Anna, more signs of magic emerged. One very important sign of magic in Anna's case, as in Scandinavian popular belief in general, was the sign of a milk-stealing hare. Some neighbours accused Anna of being able to command a so-called milk hare to bring her more milk and butter. These milk hares were magical beings, similar to English helper spirits.[21] In some regions of Sweden, they were seen as being created by the sorcerer or sorceress out of their own blood.[22] In any case, a person with magical powers could command the milk-hare by their will. The animal was the mirror of the witch; if it was hurt the witch would show the same wound.[23] Power over hares symbolized command of the outside, as hares were seen to be wild animals signifying the outside in their originating from either the north-west or the forest, jumping over the fence into the farmstead,

[20] Ibid.

[21] The English helper spirits are discussed in Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, 71–74 here the familiar spirit appeared in the shape of cat and seemed to have stronger sexual connotations but was not specifically related to milk stealing.

[22] Nildin-Wall and Wall, "The Witch as Hare or the Witch's Hare," 67.

[23] Ibid., 71.

the field, or the garden, all of which in Scandinavia symbolized the space of the social inside.[24]

In the trial of Anna Nilsdotter, several narratives portrayed the sign of the hare as an ambivalent sign of Anna's magic. On the one hand, it was emphasized that the accused could command a milk-hare to gain milk and butter; on the other, she was said to be able to command them to be shot, thereby bringing hunting luck for others (for payment). Another witness played on the assumed magical power which enabled Anna to command hares when he reported to the court that he had heard a man from Jönköping saying that he had no hunting luck until he gave Anna Nillsdotter five silver coins, after which he was able to shoot five hares. In both narratives, power over the hare was represented as a sign of her alleged supernatural powers.

The social reputation of Anna Nillsdotter was constructed at the court in congruence with the negative implicit meanings of several magic signs. The hare was a symbol of the outside—the forest—and spiritual powers. It was understood that to be able to command a hare to bring milk and butter signified the ability to transgress boundaries and move outside the social realm. This interpretation was supported by the antisocial implications of her behaviour, as represented by the accusations of her stealing milk and butter from others in order to enhance the productivity of her own cows.[25] A further morally and socially degrading behaviour was suggested by the report of the fact that Anna sold the hunting luck for money to an outsider. Wise women were not expected to demand any payment for the services they provided, especially not money, but they might accept gifts offered to them in exchange for their help. Popular Swedish culture contained medieval tales which cautioned healers not to demand more than their due.[26] In the narrative of the court, such demands for payment were interpreted as evidence that the accused healer, Anna, was of an anti-social and greedy nature. This bad repute was consistent with the negative interpretation of the magical sign, her power over the hare. The picture is in

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[24] Gurevich, "Semantics of the Medieval Community: 'Farmstead', 'Land', 'World'," 200–09.

[25] For a discussion of theft as crime in Scandinavia see Österberg, *Mentalities and Other Realities*, 107–08.

[26] Ingar Lövkrona discusses how a midwife was warned not to take more from elves than she would usually receive from humans. If she disobeyed, she would have to spend the rest of her life under the earth with the elves as a punishment; Lövkrona, "The Pregnant Frog and the Farmer's Wife," 73–123.

harmony with the narrative, indicating that the trouble began because, as a widow, she refused to move out and leave the house to the new organist. She quarreled with the blacksmith and she cursed the juror. She came irregularly to church and left early at spiritually significant moments. Other testimonies emphasized quarrels with her stepchildren, who testified against her, portraying her as avaricious, much like the narrative in which her greed caused her to steal milk from neighbours with the help of a milk hare.

The interesting point here is that these accusations were only gradually and implicitly made. As a rule, each witness initially left open the question of whether the appearance of hares in the churchyard and around the house of the accused was a sign of magic. But as they progressed, the witnesses' narratives were structured in a way that convinced the audience that the hares *were* milk-hares, seen around Anna's house because she commanded them. The next implicit conclusion for the audience was that if she could command milk hares then she could also cause the juror's horse to tremble, so that the juror broke his leg. Once a sign was accepted as such, for example the hare, and its social meaning had been implied in the narrative, in this case that she was in possession of so much milk and cheese from only two cows, then other signs were perceived in the same logic of magical causality. Indeed, one sign—here a hare—became the proof of the magical significance of other signs; in our story this was the stumbling horse and the broken leg which resulted from the fall.

Let us return to the trial and see how Lars Nillsson testified to Anna's reputation by stating firstly that hares had been seen around the place where Anna lives, "but he does not know if Anna is milking [them] or not". Then he reported:

> that Anna comes very late to church, and seldom comes in before the confession of sins has been read out, and she likes to leave before the blessing has been spoken. In regard to the cheeses which he and other witnesses had seen in Anna's room[27] last winter, he could not help but see these three cheeses which hang in an old linen dress, and weigh for sure more than 2½ marker, and Anna [must have] had a lot of milk, more than he thought her two cows would milk.[28]

[27] A *stuga* was the central and only room with a hearth in the house.

[28] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1719/20, Västergötland, county of Skaraborg, Vartofta hundred, trial vs Anna Nillsdotter (Arens 2:38).

Here the witness implicitly gives meaning to the described sign of the hares: they must have been magical milk-hares because he saw with his own eyes that Anna had more cheese than was likely to have been produced by her two cows.

The signs of magic such as the hare, traditionally a motif of witchcraft signifying envy and avarice, were supported by Anna's bad social reputation in these narratives. Anna was accused of coming late to church, significantly after the confession of sins, and leaving before the priest's blessings, indicating that she shied away from Christian teachings, confirming the perception that witches were afraid of the sacrament. The blacksmith reported that she did not care whether the church burned down or not. Further, her behaviour was described as immoral, with witnesses reporting her as quarrelsome, selling beer, and given to alcohol. They emphasized that she became worse after her husband died. The blacksmith in particular had complained about her behaviour and said that "one can not speak about the vexed life in this church house". In her defence, Anna Nillsdotter denied any doing of witchcraft and pleaded for witnesses for her good reputation to be heard:

> Anna Nillsdotter was of the opinion that she shall get witness' testimonies that she has been living piously and without the use of witchcraft (*trul-dom*) and refers to Olof Håkansson in Ekeberg and his mother Ingiärd Andersdotter, with whom Anna had been living as a boarder for three years, and thought it was necessary that the court let them be summoned to the court tomorrow.[29]

These witnesses suggested by Anna did not, however, appear in the trial. Furthermore, Anna Nilsdotter pointed out that she had been harassed about witchcraft for a longer period:

> Anna complained that she now for the fifth year was contesting the rumour of witchcraft, but now desires to be freed from it by the court because she, as she says, of this has always been innocent.[30]

Finally, Anna Nillsdotter was questioned at the assize court after accusation and witnesses had been heard, in June, 1720. She was reminded to tell the truth and give a confession:

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[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.

> Then she admitted that she had three or four years ago met a wandering woman, whom she didn't know, who had taught her how to bless cattle for milk sickness. She was told to first spit and then to scratch the buttocks of the creature until the blood comes and to give it to the creature. This shall help if they have been deprived of their life force.[31]

The questioning continued:

> Asking Anna Nillsdotter on which occasion she came to juror Nills Larson [in his house] in Bräninge on the morning after he had broken his leg? Answered: that after the juror had been at her place with this resolution the previous day, she went on the same day to the sheriff in Jönköping to discuss with him whether he would help her in the court. But she received a rejection. She went, on the advice of this sheriff, to Kiämpap and because it was on the way she went to see the juror after she had heard that he had broken his leg. She had no prior knowledge that he had broken his leg but the juror questioned this.[32]

The accusation had emphasized the sudden appearance of Anna at the place of the juror as a significant fact. Because a witch was believed to be the first, or one of the first, to come to the victim and ask how he was and if she could help him, Anna had to provide a plausible non-significant account of the event in her narrative.[33] Anna said she visited the sheriff who told her about the broken leg and she saw the juror because it was on her way.

Since Anna had been taken into custody to the prison in Lidköping between the court session in June and the next session of the assize court on 19 November, 1720, she had been in prison for five months. When she was asked if she would make a confession she answered that, "Because she is innocent, she shall never confess. They could do whatever they wanted to do with her".[34] On 21 November, the court announced its sentence, subject to the approval of the Appeal Court: she was to be beaten and to be instructed thoroughly in her Christian belief by the priest and to undergo one Sunday's public penance in church.[35]

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[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] This indicates that nobody could have had time to tell the witch about the disaster, but instead the witch knew it before anybody else because she had caused it herself.

[34] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1719/20, Västergötland, county of Skaraborg, Vartofta hundred, trial vs. Anna Nillsdotter (Arens 2:38).

[35] Ibid.

A different construction of magical signs and their ambivalence can be found in the case of Elias Andersson in the county of Grums, province of Värmland, who blessed the cows in his home region against evil magic.[36] According to the surviving accounts of the trial in 1722, Andersson offered to protect the cows of his neighbours and other farmers by stroking them with twigs which he had gathered from the forest before sunrise on the day of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (*Korsmäss*). The twigs were tied to the door of the barn, then the cattle went in and out. Elias stood in the door and as the cattle walked to and fro he stroked their heads and backs with a bundle of nine rods tied with string which he held in his right hand. In the court he claimed that this ritual was intended to protect the cows "from evil and misfortune". He explained further:

> as he is striking [the cow] and reaches the small back of the cow [*Korsryggen*] he would make three crosses and say: "In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost." She said that with these means and prayer the cattle can be protected from witches [*Trulkånor*], the wood spirit [*skogsrå*] and other evil [*elakhet*]. That none of these shall gain power over them [the cows] but instead they will thrive afterwards.[37]

Elias used Christian prayer, gestures, and forest wood to work magic. The signifier and the signified were indistinguishable: words were power, physical gestures had spiritual power, forest wood protected domestic animals. Not only was the social inside (farm animals) connected with the outside (protection against spirits and witches), but Elias had power over the outside. Symbolically, he had used certain timber from the outside, the forest, tied in a bundle, to perform the counter magical ritual. The correspondence of micro- and macrocosm is further emphasized in the semantic relation between the time of the ritual (*Korsmässa*) and the location on the cow's body upon which the powerful words must be said (*Korsryggen*).[38]

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[36] RA, Justierevisionen. Besvärs-och Ansökningsmål, 1722, Värmland, hundred of Grums, case vs Elias Andersson.

[37] Ibid.

[38] This case is also a good example of how popular magic and Christianity (*Korsmässa* as a Catholic holiday) in Lutheran Sweden is simply fused and subsumed into the broader categories of inside and outside, microcosm and macrocosm. A strict separation between the magical and the religious was neither evident not logical from this point of view.

Ambiguity and Bodily Experience: Being Inside, Being Outside

For eighteenth-century people, the sign of magic was not read as a text, but was experienced in the body. Pain, illness, or sudden recovery potentially gave rise to spiritual revelations. Like medieval mystics or Protestant visionaries, eighteenth-century Swedes regarded their bodies, and those of their farm animals, as holding spiritual meaning. Elias Andersson, and the farmers who asked him to perform his ritual, interpreted their cows' illnesses as a sign that wood spirits or witches wielded spiritual power over their bodies. During his trial, Elias admitted that on another occasion he had asked for salt from the widow Annika Andersdotter in order to heal cows from choleric fit. As fits were held to be caused by magic, it was considered that these cows were experiencing magic in a bodily sense,[39] and their pain appeared significant. It was the function of the court to decide the meaning of signs of the body.

In sorcery trials at the assize courts this link between bodily sign and spiritual message was at the centre of inquiry. In popular thought, illness, pain, death, or healing were linked to the negative or positive intentions of community members who were believed to have magical powers as a result of a strong self. These people held the power to harm or heal because they were able to access the metaphysical macrocosm. During the eighteenth century, the local clergy appeared more frequently as plaintiffs, presenting alleged magical healings as fraud and blasphemy and thereby denying the notion of somatic states as holding any spiritual meaning.

The Scandinavian world was perceived by its medieval and early modern inhabitants as a principal dualism of inside and outside spheres.[40] Signs of magic communicated whether a person was inside or outside the social, moral, and legal realms, and thus a person's social identity in terms of whether they were a witch or not could be discussed in those terms. The semantic evidence as well as the social and cultural implications of this world view have been discussed by historians, who also emphasized that medieval Icelandic and European societies had a particularly strong legal orientation.[41] The regulation of social

[39] RA, Justierevisionen. Besvärs-och Ansökningsmål, 1722, Värmland, hundred of Grums, case vs. Elias Andersson (Arens 6:13).

[40] Gurevich, "Semantics of the Medieval Community," 200–09.

[41] Ibid. See also Hastrup, "Cosmology and Society in Medieval Iceland."

relationships was closely tied to the law—even speaking and silence were calculated forms of legal behaviour.[42] In many regards, this division of inside and outside was an exact reflection of this distinctive legal viewpoint. Being inside the social space was synonymous with being inside the law, while any activity outside the social space was considered as equivalent to being outside the law. Inside and outside were divisions which referred to the moral, spiritual, and social assessment of the event. These paradigms helped to organize personal experiences by shaping them into a social and legal discourse of magic.

The dichotomy of inside and outside was sustained and perpetuated in sorcery trials. To be able to convict somebody of magic the court had to prove that the suspect had been on the outside in the metonymical or metaphorical sense. The dualism of inside and outside as paradigms for microcosm and macrocosm in the Scandinavian world view since pre-Christian times still provided an important frame of reference for representing magic in the eighteenth century. Because the concepts of inside and outside were sufficiently flexible to be adapted to changing social and historical situations, the interpretation of signs of magic became an important social process and court narratives reflected conflicting interpretations. What changed was the meaning which the moral community referred to as 'inside' and 'outside'. 'Outside' was in peasant accusations a metonym, combining the antisocial behaviour of harm-inflicting neighbours with literal outside movements such as sitting on the fence or flying to the sabbath. To the clergy, this outside could be the place of the Sabbath, as a metaphor for being outside the Christian community. The following example gives us an illustration of this perception.

In 1720, at an extraordinary court session, the girl Brita Persdotter made a confession that the neighbours' wives had abducted her to a witches' sabbath.[43] Her descriptions of their flight to the sabbath and the sabbath itself reveal some of the most fundamental qualities of the nature of the world as seen by eighteenth-century Swedes. Like descriptions of the sabbaths in the previous century, as in the Dalarna witch hunts of the 1670s, Brita Persdotter's experiences present to the modern reader an almost surreal picture. She told the court that on Easter night of 1720 the accused Elin Erichsdotter came to invite her

[42] Österberg, "Strategies of Silence," in her *Mentalities and Other Realities*, 9–30.

[43] RA, 1722, Justitierevisionen, Besvärs-och Ansökningsmål, Brita Persdotter vs Lisbet Hansdotter, Kierstin Nillsdotter, Elin Erichsdotter (Arens 6:9).

to attend a feast. Elin used a hat which she rubbed with an ointment and in this way both women flew through the air (*i wädret*) over mountain and forest to the church of Ny Sochn, inside which many people had already assembled. Then Brita described how in the church Satan distributed bread and wine and everybody who was present received it. Later, they flew up to the church tower and rang the bells. As the two women continued their journey, they came to Hell, where the guests sat down, ate, drank, and danced, then flew home. The girl insisted that she had again been abducted in this way by Elin at Easter of the following year.

Because of this weighty accusation involving the witches' sabbath, which was exceptional in Scandinavian magic trials of the eighteenth century, Brita had to detail her description of the feast in Hell. She reported that when they met in the church, where Satan preached for a while, he distributed the host and wine and said that they would now drink from the Devil's chalice and eat his body. Later at the feast in Hell, Satan welcomed the women and asked them each to take a seat. But Brita could not eat the food because:

> before my eyes was what I thought [to be] snails and frogs, they forced me to eat but I did not taste anything. But the women ate a lot. They said to me: "Eat you silly thing, don't you see how delicious the food is?" But that still did not happen [that she ate it]. But instead they gave me the food they had brought along which was butter, cheese, meat, bread, and sweet porridge which they had devoted to Satan's wife, who came in during the meal and welcomed everybody.[44]

In the context of an accusation of witchcraft, this sign of Brita's being unable to eat was significant because it meant that she was the only one who saw the true nature of this feast—snails and frogs, which in folklore symbolized evil such as carnal lust[45]—while all other participants regarded the feast as a delicious meal. She was the only one who was hesitant and uncooperative with Satan. She was the only participant who could *see* ("to my eyes"). As I have pointed out, the act of seeing represented spiritual power in Scandinavian belief.[46] Powerful people

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[44] RA, 1722, Justitierevisionen, Besvärs-och Ansökningsmål, Brita Persdotter vs. Lisbet Hansdotter, Kierstin Nillsdotter, Elin Erichsdotter (Arens 6:9).

[45] Lövkrona, "The Pregnant Frog and the Farmer's Wife."

[46] The causal relationship between visible and invisible existed also in other popular cultures. For a fascinating discussion of this relation in early modern Germany see Charles Zika, "The Devil's Hoodwink."

could see through the everyday world into the macrocosm, and here the narrator deploys the meaning of 'seeing through the surface' to demonstrate her own moral innocence. In her description of the sabbath scene, Brita relates how everyone else is happily feasting, falsely believing that the food is good and tasty, while only she can see *through* this false reality and discover the true nature of the event as a diabolical gathering. She refuses the hand of Satan and thus maintains her moral virtue.

Brita Persdotter's report illustrates very strongly the interconnectedness of micro- and macroworld and the fluid boundaries between them. Indeed, in her narrative Brita emphasized that to all other participants of the nightly gathering, the outside and inside worlds were one, and that they perceived these events as being normal. Only Brita saw them as spiritually significant, as evil. In her narrative, she emphasized that to her this meeting with the Devil was in every respect abnormal, and that she therefore refused to cooperate. Because the microworld of peasants' feasts and the macro world of the Devil's meeting in this description are on the surface not distinguishable, it takes particular moral strength to see beyond appearances and to recognize the true character of the gathering. The meeting at the witches' sabbath does not seem particularly cruel in nature: this is a feast to which the invited women bring their own cheese, bread, and meat, the master of the house greets arriving guests, his wife comes during the meal to welcome everybody, and all thank her afterwards for the meal. The only hint that this very familiar scenery is unreal is provided by specific signs, carefully interwoven: tasteless food, a gigantic snake with four feet, snails and frogs instead of real food which only the narrating girl could see, while all other guests believe it to be a delicious feast.

During her sleep, Brita perceived herself as wandering off to the outside, "flying over forests and mountains", and this outside included a perverse gathering of the Devil's feast in her parish church. In Scandinavian popular narratives, the directions of west and north indicate the social outside. The narrative constructed by Brita, who wanted the neighbouring women to be prosecuted and punished, emphasized that it was the accused women who led her to the outside, which was perceived as a spatial, social, and moral place. In this context, the geographic directions of west and north are symbols for the social and moral outside to which these women abduct Brita. This sign of the flight to the north-west was carefully chosen in order to give a

clear and unambiguous picture and meaning to the behaviour of the neighbouring women.

I have argued so far that the meaning of magic derived from the suggested nature of various signs, and that these were understood in very different ways in eighteenth-century Sweden. The first step in the process of interpreting these signs was to ascertain whether a certain phenomenon was in fact a sign or not. Doubts about the significance of signs were equally a strategy of narrators to attribute magical meanings to particular acts. In early modern Sweden, debate about the potential spiritual significance of bodily phenomena extended to food and eating,[47] as illustrated by Brita's experience.[48] In her description of Satan's feast, Brita focused in particular on the meaning of food at this meeting. She emphasized to the assize court in Värmland that only she recognized the food presented in Satan's house as being snakes and worms, while none of the other participants saw through the surface and enjoyed it as delicious meal, urging Brita several times to join in. In her view, the food undoubtedly signified both her neighbours' witchcraft and her own innocence. The local court was sceptical and stated to the Appeal Court that "this could very well be a phantasy". The ambiguity of magical signs in Brita's narrative is implied: it was debatable as to whether the presentation of food was a sign of spiritual significance or not.

This ambiguity of magical signs also extended to magical practitioners themselves. In a case from 1722, the main suspect Elin Erichsdotter "was much suspected by the people here of this place that she could do evil". At the same time the court learned that:

> the folks here at this place, in one voice, bear much fear for her [Elin], that she could inflict on them some evil, and therefore they do not like to have much to do with her, [reported] also that she, like Lisbet from Klämman, used witchcraft and other superstitious arts to heal both folk and creatures, [these arts] they asked her to use for many years and she was much renowned [for her practice].[49]

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[47] For a gendered perspective on spiritual meanings of eating and food for medieval mystics see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*.

[48] RA, 1722, Justitierevisionen, Besvärs-och Ansökningsmål, case vs Lisbet Hansdotter, Kierstin Nillsdotter, Elin Erichsdotter (Arens 6:9).

[49] RA, 1722, Justitierevisionen, Besvärs-och Ansökningsmål (Arens 6:9).

The interpretation of her activities, whether healing or harming, depended on the social relation between the wise woman Elin Erichsdotter and the villagers concerned. In principle, people believed that she was able to do both—to kill or cure.

In early modern Sweden, the outside world could further interfere with people's lives, in the form of ghosts. These were believed to be the souls of the dead and returning ancestors (*gastar*), who were regarded as powerful forces of the outside world.[50] If such a case reached the local court, the meaning of the ghostly sign was again determined in close relation to, and depending on, the social reputation of the suspect. In 1761 in Ronneby, the bailiff accused two maids of superstition and immoral behaviour on grounds of a "widespread rumour" about the appearance of a ghost. On several nights, a frightening noise was heard in the maids' bedroom. Finally, one of the maids, Catharina, addressed the noise as follows: "If you are from God reveal yourself and lie down here [where] they have put you down. But if you are from the Devil, then pull and twitch like so many who hop and creep."[51] The next night the young women heard the noise again. That night a cooper journeyman stayed with the frightened Catharina, and it was pointed out in the narrative, that he did so "on her bed". The noise returned again on the third night and the journeyman addressed it with the following words: "If you are one of my folks which is dead, so reveal yourself". This was clearly perceived to be a potentially dangerous situation and the journeyman was reported to have "felt very cold in his whole body". Catharina said to her half-brother, who was also present: "God help that you could do that my brother, I am now so frightened that I fear a blow".[52]

The witnesses' repeated emphasis on their feelings of fright supports the implicit meaning of the noises as a sign which could signify the Devil, as well as deceased relatives.[53] Several other witnesses indicated

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[50] Hastrup notes that the shamanistic tradition in Scandinavia is evident in 'sitting out' for knowledge, which was understood as a metaphor for entering the supernatural realm of the trolls; "Iceland: Sorcerers and Paganism," 391. Similarly, Hastrup showed that the power of the dead is revealed in many Icelandic ghost stories; "The Power of Knowledge," 211.

[51] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1761, county of Blekinge, city of Ronneby, case vs Catarina Maria Apelroth and Jons Martensson (Arens 4:15).

[52] Ibid.

[53] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 4, 1768, Skåne, county of Malmöhus, hundred of Vemmenhog. Hans Swensson and his brother Anders Swensson were accused of advising their brother-in-law Olof Husman on a magical ritual. The men advised him to place a frog in the coffin at the feet of their dead sister Elna Swensdotter, "so she would not

in more detail that they thought the noise was caused by ghosts and described how they performed protective rituals against the potentially harmful powers of the dead:

> Master Sweditski has reported that he meanwhile had seen [something] like a little boy and on the other side like a *gast*, therewith he commanded Jönsen's wife to make the sign of the cross over her children, which she did, after that Sweditski spat and said "twi".[54]

Later they threw a piece of iron into the fire and heard a dog barking. They emphasized that the reason for this ritual was "in order to scare (*skrämma*)[55] the ghost (*spöket*)". This is in line with the maids' interpretation of the noise as a sign of magic: they performed counter magic (casting iron in fire, sign of the cross, spitting) in order to get rid of it. But the court did not accept this meaning for the events, attributing them rather to the bad moral reputation of the girls and the presence of young men in their bedroom over several nights. Consequently, the court dismissed the notion of their having been any spiritual significance to the noise, interpreting it instead as fraud and trickery by some young men. Again, social relationships were a determining factor in the meaning ascribed to this case, after the bailiff made an unfavourable comment on the girls' reputation in his narrative to the court.

Ambiguity of Intentions

Ambiguities with regard to the meaning of magic concerned not only the problem of whether a phenomenon was a sign or not, but also the question of whether the alleged magical deed was benevolent or malevolent. Because Scandinavian magic drew, in both its benevolent and malevolent forms, on the same logic of causality—the interconnectedness of body and soul, micro- and macrocosm—the ideological distinctions were not at all clear. In popular magic, this distinction was perceived and constructed according to the social consequences of the magical deed. In contrast, secular and ecclesiastical authorities judged

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return and spook". On returning dead in Swedish folklore see Klintberg, "'Gast' in Swedish Folk Tradition."

[54] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1761, county of Blekinge, city of Ronneby, case vs Catarina Maria Apelroth and Jons Martensson (Arens 4:15).

[55] Note the connotation of the verb *skrämma* when used in magical practice regarding horses and oxen: the semantic expression to *skrämma hästen* meant to withdraw the life essence from a horse.

magic by its cause, not its effect. This is one reason for the ambiguity of signs and multiple discourses about the meaning of magical practice. In the trial of Karin Biörnsdotter, a series of different meanings was attributed to the magical power of the accused.[56] The bailiff and jurors emphasized that the accused Karin had practised her *signeri* at many farmsteads, which she herself admitted. The court was particularly interested in the source and the authority of her knowledge and power, implying that her ritual blessings were blasphemy. Karin answered that she had learnt how to bless from her father's sister some sixteen years earlier, at which point in the narrative a man from the court audience called out that Karin was known as wicked witch (*arge Trulkåna*). A negative comment such as this upon her Karin's craft stood in sharp contrast to Karin's perception of herself as a woman of good and pious words. The jury expanded the negative argument by accusing Karin of sin and blasphemy. This case illustrates that multiple meanings of magic were possible: piety and beneficence, and blasphemy or witchcraft resulting in social harm.

The establishment of bodily phenomena as signs of magic was central to the trials in local courts. Accusers, accused, and witnesses structured their narratives around the central question of whether a cited bodily phenomenon was a sign of magic and if so, what it signified. Additional witnesses were called upon to testify about the reputation of the accused and their evidence was often decisive in the final definition of the magical deed. Most cases took a dramatic turn once additional witnesses were heard because the meaning attributed to signs of the body cited in the initial accusation was implicitly supported or opposed in the testimonies of these additional witnesses. In June 1726, Boell Persdotter was accused of witchcraft (*trolldom*) at the local assize court of Luggude in Skåne.[57] In the accusation, the bailiff referred to a "strange (*underlig*) event" on the previous Maundy Thursday.[58] Boell had been called during the night to her niece's house to assist her in childbirth.[59] The following morning, while on her way

[56] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1711, province of Västergötland, county of Älvsborg, hundred of Bollebygd, trial vs. Karin Biörnsdotter (Arens 3:32).

[57] LLA, AIa:19, Skåne, county of Malmöhus, hundred of Luggude, 1726, case vs Boell Persdotter.

[58] Thursdays in general, and the Easter week in particular, were times used for magic in Sweden.

[59] The Swedish source specifies that this was her sister's daughter. This point might be of interest in recognizing female networks, through the female line of kinship.

home, she had been seen by two men who became suspicious about her appearance and her apparent state of mind. Furthermore, despite her old age—she was sixty-eight at the time—she seemed to have made the difficult journey between her niece's house, the farm of the male witnesses, and her own home in a suspiciously short time. The court questioned Boell in detail about the events of that night and Maundy Thursday morning. Boell was confronted with the suspicion that both her strange appearance and her unbelievably fast journey had been caused by a meeting with the Evil One. This she denied. The conflict between accuser and accused was about whether her appearance and fast journey were signs of magic, or whether they could be explained naturally, as Boell insisted. To clear up this conflict of meanings, further witnesses were called to testify to the events of that morning and to Boell's reputation. The local court decided first in favour of Boell Persdotter, but referred the case to the Appellate Court because the case had "caused much talk among the people".

All women who had been present at the birth on the eve of Maundy Thursday testified in favour of Boell's reputation. They disputed the accusation that Boell was drunk when she left her niece's house. They also strongly denied that forbidden rituals in connection with the birth of the child had taken place. Instead, they emphasized the morning prayer which all attended after morning tea and before Boell left to go home. Directly questioned by the court as to whether they knew anything about Boell's alleged ability to bless, they denied it. With this statement, they also implicitly denied significance both to allegations concerning Boell's appearance or concerning her fast journey home. In contrast, another female witness who was called upon to testify to Boell's reputation told the court that she had for a long time suspected Boell of having bewitched the witness' mother. Boell "plagued her which lasted for nineteen weeks until her death". This negative representation of Boell's abilities was supported by further testimony supplied by a young woman who claimed that thirteen years previously she had seen Boell's likeness sitting on the church wall.[60] In popular Swedish culture, sitting on a wall or fence was a sign of going outside in order

[60] The metaphor of the likeness links implicitly to the image of an astonishingly fast journey, which also implies flying and formed part of the initial accusation. The witness' suspicion of Boell as inflicting harm and death affirms the court's implicit accusation of Boell's connection with the Evil. But while the court suggested that her bad behaviour resulted from the outside—the contact with the evil—the witnesses proposed that it was Boell's inner capacity to do so, and that no devil was needed.

to do witchcraft.[61] This meaning was reinforced by another sign: the witness stated that she saw Boell on the church wall early on Easter morning. In this case we are again presented with multiple layers of the meanings of magic.

This division of meaning is, in my view, not a reflection of a division between popular culture and learned culture, or authorities and community, but a result and expression of a much finer-grained social hierarchy. Further evidence for this argument can be found, I believe, in the seemingly paradoxical fact that often the women and men accused of harming magic had in fact been asked by villagers on other occasions to perform protective or healing rituals. This paradox is solved by an acceptance of the ambivalence of spiritual power: those who can send the evil can also remove it.[62] In early modern Scandinavian popular culture, it was accepted that wise people could access the outside world for both good and evil ends.

The ambiguity of signs of magic was not restricted to its practitioners, but applied to the same extent to the objects used in all forms of magic. In Sweden, popular items like the magical knot were used frequently for both benevolent and malevolent purposes. Hanna Isackz used a magical knot to help the wife of Nills Willumson[63] who had asked her for advice because "her husband was living on bad terms with her". Hanna replied that she would look into the matter, whereupon Nills Willumson's wife gave her a piece of fat meat and a two schilling coin, and Hanna then returned home. Three weeks later, Hanna Isaacksdotter sent a knot containing some soil from the chapel in Cabusa to Johanna Hansdotter (a friend of hers in Ystad), and charged him to ask a girl to go to Nills Willumson and put the knot under his pillow. The court records state that:

> Hereafter Nills shall have been living for a little while well with his wife and when the said woman (*konan*) [Johanna Hansdotter] came again to his house, he became changed and forgave his wife.[64]

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[61] Cleasby, ed., *Icelandic-English Dictionary*, 645, explains that *tún-rida* is an expression for a ghost or witch; both were thought to ride on hedges during the night. It needs to be added that hedge here is close to fence or wall, dividing the inside from the outside. Witches' night rides implied that they were outside their real bodies and traveled outside social realms. See the discussion in Chapter Three.

[62] Larner, *Enemies of God*, 141.

[63] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, Skåne, city of Ystad, case vs Johanna Hansdotter (Arens 2:30).

[64] Ibid.

In this case, the magical knot which was used by the wise woman was given a positive interpretation by Nills' wife; it had worked in her favour. In other cases, a magical knot featured as the means for inflicting illness. In 1758, Elin Fränberg admitted in the court that she had pretended to have found hidden knots under the crib in the barn, which she claimed were threatening the health of the cows. Similarly, a widow named Maria Andersdotter and her sons Hans and Johan had to explain to the bailiff why "knots, filled with hair and other superstitious material" had been found in their barn.[65] Significance attributed to a magical object such as a knot did not exist absolutely, but only in relation to a precise social context.

Ambiguity and the Causality of Magic

The ambiguity of magic related to both the link between sign and cause and to the cause itself. The invisible cause of magic was, as we have seen in the previous chapter, located in the invisible macrocosm. In popular imagination, this was not only the realm of Satan and God, but also of ancestors and the invisible inner self. The defendants had to prove that their intentions had been morally beyond reproach. While popular interpretations of magic were concerned with the intentions behind the act, they were less concerned with the source of magic. A typical situation was the trial of Marta Olufzdotter, who in 1707 was accused of magical healing.[66] To the assize court, she admitted that "she would bring back the [stolen] money, if not with God's help so with the help of the Devil".[67] This case demonstrates how a wise woman was asked to re-establish the social balance, through rituals of healing and recovery of stolen goods. Her alleged power to employ either God or Satan in this matter was of no concern to the local community. In this instance, the ambivalence of the source of spiritual power, which could

[65] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1758, county of Malmöhus, hundred of Torna, case vs Elin Franberg; RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1761, Östergötland, Göstring hundred, case vs Johan Nilsson and Hans Nilsson and their mother Maria Andersdotter. See also RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1701, Bohuslän county, hundred of Askim, bailiff Zacharias Hermyn vs Hallge Swenningson.

[66] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 1, 1707, counties of Göteborg and Bohuslän, hundreds of Tunge and Sorbygden, case vs Marta Olufzdotter (Arens 2:29).

[67] Ibid.

be either divine or diabolical, did not present a problem or conflict. The rightfulness and authenticity of Marta's power was not dependent on its source, the cause of magic, but rather on its use in the interest of the community. However, for the Lutheran pastor who had brought Marta's activities to the attention of the bailiff, these matters were not so simple. Within his understanding of the world, supernatural acts were a matter of either Satan or God, not of social and moral obligation to the community. In magic cases initiated by the clergy, the ambiguity of magic's source of power was at the centre of inquiry.

The ambiguity of the intent underlying magical activities was evident in a case in Skåne where the farmhand Anders Carlsson admitted to harrowing the fields on Maundy Thursday before sunrise so that "the thistles in his fields would disappear".[68] The court asked him "if he thinks that he therewith had committed a sin"? But Anders replied that "he does not know in what ways he would have made a mistake especially since this all had only happened with good intent". Anders got away with this reasoning because he was supported by his neighbours. The farmers present at the trial confirmed that:

> Anders Carlsson is a quiet and well-behaved person, so that one has never heard anything evil about him, but he has always had a good reputation, but is said to be very simple-minded and confiding.[69]

In this case, the accused and his community convinced the court of the harmless meaning of his action and in particular his intent.

The accusation of the sin of blasphemy could not be deflected so easily in all cases, however, as seen in the following example, in which a man was publicly shamed for his healing rituals. In the 1722 trial against Elias Andersson,[70] who was accused of blasphemy, the court did not accept Elias' represention of his healing practices, but constructed a very different link between the charms used and their meaning. The court ruled that:

> Therefore he [Andersson] did not only use both [rituals and prayer] at home for himself as well as on other farms, but he also taught other folk

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[68] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1757, county of Kristianstad, hundred of Gard, case vs Anders Carlsson.

[69] Ibid.

[70] RA, Justierevisionen. Besvärs- och Ansökningsmål, 1722, Värmland, hundred of Grums, case vs. Elias Andersson (Arens 6:13).

> how to do this [....] and that one cannot regard it to be a sin to seek to protect oneself [from evil magic].[71]

In this case, the court linked sin to betrayal. Both forms of moral and social behaviour were outside the law and needed to be punished. The sentence which was announced in the case of Elias Andersson reflected this interpretation of the court: public penance in the 'shame chair' (*pahle*) outside the church of Grums for two Sundays and the additional corporal punishment of being whipped.[72]

Ambiguity and the Courts

Court narratives were intended to construct a meaningful account of ethical and social behaviour. In these narratives, bodily phenomena such as sudden pain, lingering illness, recovered health, and animal sickness could indicate magic. Whether the court accepted these phenomena as signs of magic depended to a significant degree on the social reputation of the accused. In negotiating the meaning of a magical deed, the public at the local court defined both the social relation between accused and accuser as well as the social position of the suspect. Because magic provided a discourse by which one could interpret society, it could be employed to redefine the social relationships between community members. In this respect, it fitted the function of the local courts during the early modern period, which, as argued earlier, were mainly stages for interpersonal conflicts. Early modern Swedish courts were, as we have seen, concerned with the reinforcement of social and ethical norms, and these social obligations became the focal point of magic narratives. Thus, signs of magic simultaneously conveyed mythical, social, and moral meanings.

In the courts, it became apparent that the ambiguity of magic was closely linked to social relations which were ambiguous in nature, those characterized by uncertainty or a competitive element.[73] An individual's agency to interpret signs of magic at the court was restrained by their social position within the local community. We have seen that the potential for signs of magic to hold conflicting meanings was consciously exploited if the relationship between accuser and accused was

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[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] This point has been argued by Jacobson-Widding, "The Shadow," 49.

conflictive. An example from Småland in 1757 illustrates this point more clearly. In this case, Ewa Swensdotter, a soldier's wife, was accused by the bailiff, on the basis of existing rumours, of "superstitious quackery" and blood-letting. Ewa was called upon and stated that she:

> had not used any quackery that harmed anybody, but because she knows some medicine [*botemedel*], she has given it to those in need. In regard to blood-letting she does not deny that she has helped many people in this way.[74]

In this case, the bailiff's accusation could be sustained in court only if witnesses ascribed to the accused a bad reputation. To this end, the bailiff called four married women as witnesses, all of whom testified that the accused had visited them in previous years and offered to heal a sick child or relative. None of the women mentioned whether she had invited Ewa in the first place to help her, and each testified that the child became better at first, but then worsened. Two children died. What was unusual in these testimonies was the great emphasis which the women placed on the payment for Ewa Swensdotter. She was given money, bread, a pair of shoes, socks, necklace, and an apron. They also emphasized that in two cases Ewa had demanded sixteen silver pennies, but that they were able to reduce the sum to twelve pennies by bargaining. Usually, payment was hardly mentioned in cases of magical healing and should in any case only have been a symbolic payment, for instance of some milk.[75] The bailiff's accusation of treachery was supported in these testimonies, all of which emphasized that Ewa demanded an unjustified payment. In particular, the metaphor of bargaining for money acted as a strong social message to convey the immoral behaviour of the accused.

At first glance, the women's testimonies seem to support fully the bailiff's accusation of "superstitious quackery and treachery". Yet it seems to me that these women actually accused Ewa Swensdotter of witchcraft. In all four testimonies, healing rituals are described which turned out to be not only unsuccessful but indeed to worsen the patient's situation. However, the sentence of this local court did not reflect an interpretation of the rituals as being physically harmful magic; rather,

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[74] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1757, Småland, county of Jönköping, hundred of Ostra, bailiff Peter Rydell vs Ewa Swensdotter (Arens 4:4).

[75] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1762, Småland, county of Kalmar, hundred of Södra More, Karin Nilsdotter and Annika Kinberg.

it emphasized the illegality of the healing practices. Ewa Swensdotter was sentenced to the payment of twenty daler silver coins or four days' prison with only water and bread for "*signeri*, quackery, and bloodletting" and also for fraud. It was further reported that she had used the sign of the cross in her healing rituals.[76] Additionally, she was notified that she would have to pay another twenty daler silver coins if she continued her practices.

The sentencing of this female healer for fraud reflects a position of the social elite that became increasingly dominant during the second half of the eighteenth century and which marked a cultural difference between social classes. The court records rarely indicate that ordinary Swedish people viewed magic as trickery or cheating. As most witnesses' testimonies show, ordinary people saw magical activities as either harmful or helpful, rather than as trickery or fraud. It was the bailiff or pastor who brought people to court for fraud. We must also allow for the fact that there were quacks who tried to earn a living by offering to heal people and animals. For example, in 1757 Anna Sophia Adamsdotter was accused of having under a false name gained money and other forms of payment for ineffective purported healing services.[77] In one case, she had demanded rings from a priest's widow. Other female witnesses emphasized that they had not summoned her, but that instead Anna Sophia had come to ask for some food and then explained that she could heal. One woman testified how Anna Sophia had stuck a knife into the butter, which then turned red, and consequently she had declined Anna's offer to perform healing rituals.[78] In these narratives, Anna was portrayed as a beggar woman, which might have made the original accusation of trickery easier, as such people assumed a peripheral and ambivalent social position in eighteenth-century Sweden.[79] All we learn about her from the manuscripts is that she was born in Copenhagen and that her father was a drummer (*trumslagare*). Her status as a wandering person, outside the village order, puts her in a category with other itinerant people, gypsies, and wandering Saami women, all

[76] Ibid.

[77] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 3, 1757, Öland, village of Gärdslösa, case vs Anna Sophia Adamsdotter (Arens 4:5).

[78] The motif of a knife struck in butter turning red was taken to be a clear sign of malevolent witchcraft and one of the secret signs to discover a witch. Similarly, milking blood from cows was understood as malevolent magic.

[79] Svensson, "On the Dark Side of Culture."

of whom were believed to be skilled in witchcraft.[80] An association of magic with the outside was central to a Scandinavian imagination of order, and thus the metaphor of a wanderer on the road carries with it associations of both social outsider and magical power.

During the eighteenth century, Swedish authorities tightened their control over people who crossed into this social and spiritual outside world. Local pastors as well as bailiffs accused lay people of blasphemy or fraud in cases of benevolent magic. For example, in 1732 Karna Lassesdotter from the village of Brunneslöf was accused by the bailiff on grounds of an "arising rumour" of sorcery.[81] The local pastor had sent a letter to the bailiff, informing him of Karna's use of blessings (*signeri*) and "the sin she had therewith committed". During the trial, it became apparent that Karna was renowned for her magical healing practices. Most witnesses stated to the court that the woman in question had helped them or their wives in one way or another and they carefully avoided any clear confirmation of Karna's use of blessings in her healing rituals. However, Erik Christiansson, a witness called to testify about Karna's honour, was very influential in this trial in establishing Karna's negative reputation. He emphasized that Karna had demanded blood from the dog of Bengt Persson, which he refused to give. Subsequently the dog died, whereas when Erik had given his dog's blood to Karna as demanded, the dog lived. These two examples indicate that Karna could use her abilities to negative or positive ends. Here, we find again a division of meaning between the priest who accused her of sin, the village women who gave her a positive reputation, and one man who suspected her of harmful witchcraft. In all these narratives, though, the narrator determined the meaning of the accused's magical activities from her social standing, and their particular relationship. The final sentence of the court depicts the sinful meaning which the priest attributed to Karna's magical practice: Karna Lassesdotter was found guilty of "sinful swearings" and ordered, "as a warning to others", to sit in the stocks in the church of Brunneslöf on two Sundays. The court also advised her to lead in future "an honest and Christian life".

The ambiguity of magic was deliberately employed as means of regulating social relationships in the community. The possibility of

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[80] See Tillhagen, "Finnen und Lappen als Zauberkundige."

[81] Lund Landsarkivet (LAA), AIa:14, Frosta häradsrätts arkiv, Domböcker vid lagtima ting 1732–1734, case vs Karna Lassesdotter (Arens 3:13).

interpreting magic as either positive or negative left considerable scope for the community to have agency in defining a person's social and moral position. Since Swedish local communities were hierarchical it is not surprising to find these social differences and conflicts reflected in the negotiation of the meaning of magic. Repeatedly, we find that during a trial, negative as well as positive magic was attributed to the same person. This seeming paradox is explained if we investigate the social relationships involved, and consider how the different interpretations of magic mirror the various social relationships between the narrator and suspect.

For example, in 1741 Jöns Persson was accused of having bewitched two horses. He was said to have given the horses excrement so that they "immediately became sick and indisposed".[82] But Jöns defended himself by emphasizing that he only healed snakebites by praying. He had been helping people since his youth and pointed out that he never demanded any payment.[83] He even recited one of his prayers (*läsnings*) for curing cows. In contrast, the bailiff insisted that "this Jöns Persson threatened in cursing that he wants to send wolves and beasts upon people", implying an anti-social aspect to his behaviour. The multivalent interpretations of signs of magic by the community and the court were on the one hand grounded in the ambiguous power of magic itself, and on the other hand in the situational and conflictive social relationships between community members and the suspect. Thus, signs of magic were interpreted in the context of specific social situations.

There was a change in attitude towards this ambiguity among the social elite in the later part of the eighteenth century. Omens were no longer regarded as signs of spiritual power, but instead were seen to be of a natural cause. Consequently, people who claimed spiritual powers were not seen necessarily as healers or witches, but were instead accused of fraud. The nature of court records changed, reflecting the court's shift from being a stage for communal tensions and social parties' rivalry, to becoming a forum for individual-state conflict. The new dominant discourse did not allow for the possibility of ambiguous meanings of the body because conceptions of the individual were so tightly framed. This simplification is demonstrated well in a case from Luggude assize

[82] RA, GHA, HRT vol. 2, 1741, Värmland, county of Fryksdal, case vs Olof Jonsson (Arens 3:20).

[83] In Swedish folklore, true healers are recognized by their humble service and non-demand of payment, in contrast to the image of the greedy witch.

court in Skåne in 1838.[84] A conflict of meanings existed between Anna Jönsdotter, who perceived herself to experience divine calls in the form of soul journeys to become a healer, and doctors who viewed her experiences and healing abilities as being caused by electricity.[85] While in religious discourse the meaning of spiritual signs was established by the church, in this particular case a new, secular, interpretation was given.[86] In a way we can say that a new social 'pressure group' emerged in the nineteenth century—secularized professionals—who overthrew previous social and religious interpretations of spiritual signs.[87]

Conclusion

The ambiguous nature of signs and the multiple meanings of magic originated in a popular eighteenth-century world view which accepted the universe as interconnected. The natural world, including the bodies of humans and animals, was infused with meaning. In this context, signs of the body could refer to moral and spiritual meanings. At the same time, not everything was spiritually significant, and early modern Swedes kept in mind that a natural cause was possible and accepted. Once a sign was held to be significant, it was open to multiple interpretations. In local courts, the only cases entered were those in which signs were accepted to be of significance. It was then the function of the court to define their meaning. Within court records, several parties created meaning and structure by organizing their narratives in distinct ways around the signs of magic.

The interpretation of these signs unfolded in narratives which linked the sign to a chain of other signs, thereby establishing a causal structure. The aim of these narratives was to remove the initial ambiguity of the sign and to give a precise meaning to the magical act. In local courts, these narratives of sorcery centred on the reputation of the suspect. Because the intent underlying a magical act could be ambivalent in terms of how it was interpreted, court narratives sought to influence its interpretation by exposing the underlying social context

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[84] LUF, manuscript Pape (Anna Jönsdotter). Later published as J. Pape, *Kloka flickan i Vallåkra*.

[85] On mesmerism in Sweden see Johanisson, *Magnetisörernas tid*.

[86] See here also the article by Werner Williams-Krapp, "'Dise ding sint dennoch nit ware zeichen der heiligkeit'."

[87] B. J. Hovde, *The Scandinavian Countries 1720–1865*.

in the form of the practitioner's reputation. In this way, the multiple meanings of magic were closely tied to the ambiguity of existing social relations. Therefore, the establishment of the reputation of the accused was of vital importance in order to define the social relation between accused and community and in this way to ascribe clear meaning to the magical deed. Contradictory interpretations of the same sign reflected a range of differing social relations with the suspect.

In the eighteenth century, these multiple meanings of magic were not only a possible but a necessary feature of court discourse. This necessity was an important aspect of close-knit societies in which behaviour acquired its meaning from a particular social situation. The ambiguity of signs suited and emphasized the character of the court. Until the middle of the eighteenth century, local courts dealt with interpersonal conflicts rather than with the conflict between state and individual. These communal conflicts were not only evident in accusations but also in witnesses' testimonies, and this allowed space for multiple interpretations. Because the signs of magic also allowed for several meanings, a range of social positions could be accommodated within the diverse imagery of magic.

The ambiguity in eighteenth-century magic trials drew on the ambiguity of the inside-outside relationship, from the positioning of the sign within the narrative, and on the uncertainty of the social status of the accused. For instance, a person believed to be able to transgress the borders between social inside and non-social outside was attributed the ambivalent power to do *maleficium* or *beneficium*. The exact meaning was established in the narrative in two ways: defining the outside and establishing the reputation of the suspect. Because the outside was ambivalent, the person who could access it was also ambivalent. In the narratives of court records, this ambivalence was employed because direct accusations of witchcraft would be slander, but if the sign was given, the rest of the narrative suggested the meaning, without spelling it out directly.

CONCLUSION

It is clear from a study of eighteenth-century Swedish witchcraft trials that popular magic remained an integral part of everyday life in Enlightenment Europe. Magic continued to provide people with the discourse and the ritual practice to express socially unacceptable emotions such as envy and anger, and to address social relationships which were perceived to violate the moral community. The surviving records of the Göta Appellate Court provide a detailed account of a wide range of magical activities which were both benevolent and malevolent in their nature. The archival material shows that in popular culture, such magical powers were not perceived as an abstract supernatural force, but as a power inherent within the individual.

In this book, I have questioned the still prevalent functionalist view which conceptualizes witchcraft as being a pragmatic concept used to explain misfortune in early modern societies. Instead, I have suggested that witchcraft and magic were part of a rich and complex cultural system, and that an analysis of these distinct cultural meanings enables us to understand its social and historical endurance. In order to understand the symbolic dimensions of these long-term magical practices, it has proven to be fruitful to regard culture as a meaningful and lived experience and as an all-encompassing social reality. By applying current anthropological perspectives of embodiment and selfhood to the analysis of witchcraft trials, it was possible to tease out specific cultural meanings of the early modern interconnected body and self.

I have also argued that researching magic in relation to the categories of person and body enables us to transcend some traditional dichotomies in witchcraft research which have hampered new insights into popular culture, such as white magic versus *maleficium*, person versus self, and text versus action. In this regard, I build on the work of other cultural historians who have proposed that magic was a logical practice, and that witchcraft and magic constituted coherent and meaningful narratives and actions in the early modern world.

It is within this clear logic of magic that the social meanings of magical acts were created. This magical world view was far from being mechanical; it was an amazingly flexible and sophisticated system of meanings which centred on the interconnectedness of self, body, and

the social and spiritual cosmos. The historical analysis of such a world calls for a theoretical perspective which accepts the experience of the historical subject, and does not attempt to 'explain it away' as most functionalist perspectives necessarily do. My close reading of witchcraft trials has employed suggestions by scholars working in historical anthropology to develop methodologies which reveal, rather than ignore, the historical meanings of popular magic in eighteenth-century Sweden.

For an understanding of magical practice, it was imperative to analyse this somatic meaning and I found the concept of embodiment to be a suitable approach. In early modern Sweden, the creation of meaning was both an individual and a collective act. Court records show how several parties created meaning by organising their narratives in distinct ways around signs of magic. Implicitly, these stories reveal the narrator's opinion about the presumed ability of the accused to access magical powers and the significance of a particular event. In eighteenth-century Sweden, multivalent meanings of magic were not only a possible but a necessary feature of the court discourse. This necessity is an important feature of close-knit societies in which behaviour acquires meaning in the context of specific social situations. By recalling the character of local courts in Sweden I argued that the ambivalent meanings of magic suited and emphasized the social character of the court. Until the middle of the eighteenth century, local courts dealt with interpersonal conflicts rather than those between state and individual. These interpersonal conflicts were not only evident in accusations but also in witnesses' testimonies; the courts allowed space for differing opinions. Because the signs of magic could be interpreted in a number of ways, a variety of social positions could be accommodated within the diverse imagery of magic.

In eighteenth-century Sweden, the relational nature of the self was central to popular magical practice. Magic of the self was semantically expressed by the verb *hugwända*, which can be translated as the turning or changing of someone's mind and intent. This magic was practised to manipulate others in healing, love magic, winning a court case, or by inflicting harm. This model of self presented an interconnected spiritual and physical entity. Indeed, the material and immaterial aspects of the person were not clearly distinguished. The self was not only constituted by language but, because of its physical qualities, it was also experienced somatically. In sorcery trials the adjectives *modstolen* and *maktstolen* were attributed to victims of harmful magic. The nouns *mod* and *makt* implied the essence of self, personal power, and physical life force. Magical acts

deprived humans and animals of their life force, resulting in illness or death. These activities were clearly perceived as anti-social behaviour because they were semantically expressed as acts of thievery.

The second important characteristic of the self in magic was its fluidity, which played a role in dreams and soul journeys, and formed an important part of sorcery narratives. Dreams had a social significance because they were understood not as expression of the unconscious or the past but as a 'guide for counsel' and predictions for the future. In soul journeys, the person left the social realm and travelled to the mythical outside. Dreams and visions revealed the capacity of the self to transgress the boundaries of the body and to access the macrocosm.

In early modern Sweden, the body was a vehicle of magic in two ways: passively, because a body (human or animal) could display signs of magic directed against it in the form of certain illnesses, and actively, because body parts and fluids were used to transmit the magical power of the owner. In this world, signs of the body were read very carefully. If bodily evidence was discussed, as it was in local courts, it was painstakingly given and considered. Bodily states, such as sleep or illness, and bodily parts, such as hair, were important components of magical acts practised by both women and men. These visible signs of illness were displayed in the disease or death suffered by the wronged party. The victim commonly demanded that the community uncover the hidden cause of the misfortune by interpreting the signs, and consequently restore health through counter-magic.

Swedish court records show that the exchange between body and community carried specific social meanings and that a person's somatic state reflected their relationship with the moral community. It was in somatic states such as pain and illness that the self displayed its relations to others. In the eighteenth century, it was still perceived that a disruption of the moral order manifested itself in a disturbance of somatic states—in ecstasy accompanying mystical visions, disease, and death. Signs of disturbance in the cosmological order were visible in disease or other loss of control in the body.

The concept of embodiment has proven to be very useful to elucidate the historical understandings of the body in popular magical practices in eighteenth-century Sweden. This perspective allows for new insights into the historicity and diversity of body representations in the early modern period. It has been a significant discovery that although the history of philosophy holds the seventeenth century as marking the change from an anthropomorphic world view to a mechanistic one, I

found convincing evidence in eighteenth-century witchcraft trials that early modern Swedes conceptualized their world via bodily analogies. The concepts of both person and body were dialectically related. The person and the body were always part of relationships, and not perceived as objects. Therefore, in differing sets of relations the self and the body took on different meanings. By deconstructing the folk models of self and body it became clear that this world view focused on relationships and that identity was not a bounded corporal unit. The fluidity and the multivalent meanings of magic, person, and body did not pose a problem to early modern Swedes. Such perspectives enable us to highlight the subjective bodily experience and to focus on a greater consideration of somatic experiences in the analysis of magic.

In my discussion of the body and magic in early modern Sweden, I hope to have shown that the concept of osmosis is a useful metaphor to describe the interconnection between body and society. In witchcraft trials, osmosis implied a conditional permeability of the body and reflected the social embeddedness of the somatic. In the context of relations which were either highly competitive or uncertain in nature, bodily intrusion was feared. Such situations could arise from the delay or refusal of social obligations such as non-payment of debts or cancellation of marriage promises. Ambiguous interpersonal relations rendered bodily borders vulnerable, and under these circumstances, the exchange between bodies was socially regulated.

Furthermore, it has become apparent in my discussion of eighteenth-century magic that emotions played a central role in the discourse of witchcraft. This leads to the question as to whether in the eighteenth century, portrayed in literary studies as the age of sentiment, emotions played a more prominent role in magical discourses than in earlier periods? Some historians have suggested that this was the case and that eighteenth-century narratives about magic reflect a new emphasis upon personal feelings and sentiments.[1] This tendency would reflect on a popular level what philosophy and literature promoted in the late

[1] Lyndal Roper has addressed the question of the role of emotions in eighteenth-century witch trials in southwest Germany, noting: "And though animals figure in the eighteenth-century trials, their role is not as important as it was in the earlier cases. People, their loves, tiffs and jealousies, form the stuff of these testimonies. Animals, the weather and the economy play a secondary role. The eighteenth century may not have witnessed the advent of the Age of Reason in Marchtal, but the Age of Sentiment had certainly dawned"; *Witch Craze*, 230–31.

eighteenth century and even more so in the early nineteenth century age of Romanticism—the centrality of individual feelings.

I believe that an alternative view is possible and that the Swedish cases offer a very different picture. Emotions in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century cases were not regarded as private sentiment, but remained powerful social forces which manifested within magical practice. The influence of such emotions was not limited to other people; animals, and as a result, the household economy, could also be negatively affected by the emotions of people who possessed magical powers. Envy was a common Swedish metaphorical expression for witchcraft. The findings for eighteenth-century Sweden confirm the historical findings for Finland, among other countries, that socially disruptive emotions such as envy, anger, and jealousy were perceived as the origin of malevolent magic.[2] Emotions themselves held material power, and malevolent magic could originate from them without any aid from the Devil.

Much of the historical witchcraft debate has focused on trials generated by witch crazes. As Behringer's work has shown, these were intense but limited occurrences, both geographically and chronologically.[3] Many witchcraft cases were heard outside of the witch crazes and as this study of eighteenth-century Sweden has shown, magical practices existed long after the persecution period. Such continuity calls for an alternative long-term approach to witchcraft studies for the entire early modern period, as has been pioneered by Dutch scholars for the Netherlands.[4] We have yet to examine more closely how the narratives of witchcraft differed between cases of the witch craze—which focused on a contract with the Devil and required a confession of the accused as well as the naming of the witch's associates—and those that were heard in 'ordinary' witchcraft trials.

This book has established that magical practices continued to exist for a much longer period than previously assumed. The emerging scholarly discussion of eighteenth-century witchcraft raises the question of new early modern comparisons for future research. In the light of the continued existence of witchcraft and magic, new research questions

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[2] Compare also Sehmsdorf, "Envy and Fear in Scandinavian Folk Tradition." For Finland, see Nenonen, "'Envious Are All the People'." For a discussion of envy and the evil eye in early modern Italy, see Gentilcore, *From Bishop to Witch.* esp. 146–48.

[3] Wolfgang Behringer, *Witches and Witch-hunts: a global history.*

[4] See for example Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra and Willem Frijhoff, eds., *Witchcraft in the Netherlands from the Fourteenth to the Twentieth Century*.

emerge: How do the narrative structures, motifs, and social dynamics that underpinned witchcraft trials compare between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries? What differences or continuities do we encounter? For example, did the role of animals change in this period? Did the eighteenth-century trials place the same emphasis on the harm of children as the earlier trials do? Does the centrality of the Devil change and indeed is there a Devil at all in most of the trials or was the demonological genre of the Devil as a source of magical power itself the exception in magical trials?

Furthermore, I believe that future research into early modern witchcraft will benefit from a broader focus that includes a wider range of expressions of popular religion such as saint worship, popular prophecy, and pilgrimage. These wider facets of religious practices warrant a more integrated research focus. A synthesized perspective such as this could overcome the existing historiographical division between research into witchcraft and research into popular piety. There has been surprisingly little cross-fertilization between the two camps, with the exception of scholars like Gabor Klaniczay, who has pointed to the similarities between narratives of *maleficium* and narratives of miracles,[5] or Peter Dinzelbacher, who has brought to our attention the similarities between representations of female witches and female saints, with an emphasis on somatic experiences as a source for either diabolic or divine power.[6] And of course the work by Scribner has demonstrated brilliantly how much can be gained from an approach to popular religion which overcomes the static categories formed by a more traditional history of religion.[7]

In this light, I believe that future witchcraft studies will gain much from a closer reading of both the Counter-Reformation and the Protestant revival movements which addressed the relationship between body, mind, and society in an equally dramatic way. Of all the Protestant revival movements, Pietism was the most influential in Scandinavia. For eighteenth-century Sweden, there were a number of Pietist groups and movements which were strictly persecuted by the Lutheran Church. Pietism, which emphasized faith healing, prophecy, and illness as its main idioms, provided young women in particular with a public space,

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[5] Klaniczay, "The Structure of Narratives on Misfortune and Healing."
[6] Dinzelbacher, *Heilige oder Hexen?*
[7] Robert W. Scribner, *Popular Culture and Popular Movements in Reformation Germany*.

as was the case for similar movements, such as the Quakerism in England. Here, young women and especially rural maid servants played a very prominent role.[8] This has also been observed for the Pietist movements in Germany.[9] What is interesting to consider in a comparison with magical practices is the fact that these discourses seem to allow little space for destructive emotions, but rather emphasize prophecy and healing. In Pietism, there is a clear link between body and community, allowing people to articulate their somatic experiences in the context of social relations and experiences. Illness was perceived as a spiritual experience and formed the main trope of German and Scandinavian Pietism.[10] What meanings were attached to the interconnected body and soul in these religious discourses? What notions of the self do we encounter in Pietism? Was a person socially relational in similar ways to the magical self? Was the body seen as permeable and did identity include here the wider household, including farm animals? And is there the same ambiguity between sign and meaning that gave magic its flexibility and historical endurance? It seems to me that in the pursuit of these questions we can establish how a fundamental interconnectedness between body and self was not only found in magic, but continued to shape religious practices parallel to and beyond the witch trials in early modern Europe.

The Enlightenment brought significant changes to witchcraft legislation and, with the repeal in 1779, an end to official prosecution in Sweden. And yet, as new research and the folklore collections of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries show, the belief in witchcraft did not disappear. Historians have only recently begun to consider this continuity of belief. One reason for this delay has perhaps been our exclusive reliance on court records associated with witch hunts, at the expense of more ordinary cases of magic. With the current awakening of historical interest in the witchcraft trials which took place after the major witch hunts, new possibilities for research into the nature of magical practices have now opened up.

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[8] See for example Carl J. E. Hasselberg, *Norrländsk fromhetsliv på sjuttonhundratalet*; Emmanuel Linderholm, *Pingströrelsen*; Maria Bondesson, "Extatisk väcksele och häxhysteri."

[9] For women and Pietism, see for example Ulrike Witt, *Bekehrung, Bildung und Biographie*.

[10] As has been discussed in Katharina Ernst, *Krankheit und Heilung*.

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